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Solidarity Building in a Structurally Unjust World

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Philosophy
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 Abstract

The articles in this thesis focus on structural injustice and political solidarity aimed at addressing structural injustice. Given that structural injustice can only be adequately addressed through collective action, these articles focus on identifying and addressing barriers to building meaningful political solidarity in resistance to structural injustice.

The first article grapples with the tension between our complicity in structural injustice and political solidarity in resistance to injustice. I first engage in the philosophical debate about whether participation in the social-structural processes that result in injustice constitutes a form of complicity. After contending that it does, I explore how complicity in structural injustice can inhibit the conditions needed for a meaningful sense of political solidarity. However, given that it is not realistic to eliminate our complicity in structural injustice, I argue that solidarity requires that we reckon with complicity in structural injustice and offer an account of what this involves.

The second article focuses on Iris Marion Young's practical concern that interpreting our responsibility for structural injustice as backward-looking blameworthiness tends to produce defensiveness, thus pushing individuals away from joining in collective movements towards justice. I argue that tendencies towards defensiveness are worsened by the fact that we have conflated backward-looking responsibility with punishment. Drawing on insights from restorative and transformative justice movements, I argue that we can disentangle backward-looking responsibility from punishment in order to begin addressing the cultural problem of defensiveness in discussions about our blameworthiness for contributing to injustice.

The third article explores solidarity building in the context of the "digital age". I clarify the connection between María Lugones' concept of "world"-traveling and solidarity building, and develop an account of "whole-hearted political solidarity". I discuss two worries about the use of social media for "world"-travelling and solidarity building, but then close by discussing some of the ways that social media can, despite those worries, be used as a helpful *tool* for finding opportunities for "world"-traveling and building solidarity with others in resistance to injustice.

Keywords

blame, blameworthiness, defensiveness, collective action, complicity, political solidarity, responsibility, social-political transformation, solidarity, solidarity building, structural injustice, transformative justice

Summary for Lay Audiences

This project focuses on structural injustice and political solidarity in resistance to structural injustice. Structural injustice is a fairly abstract concept but, in short, it refers to injustices that are the result of a wide range of "social-structural processes" and how those processes interact together (i.e. institutional policies and practices, economic processes, infrastructural decisions, as well as social norms and conventions). This means that structural injustice arises as a result of the "normal flow" of daily life, rather than individuals doing something wrong in a direct way. We can think, for example, of climate change. Presumably, none of us intend to contribute to climate change, yet most of us do simply by participating in modern life (i.e. driving gas-powered vehicles, using single-use plastic products, and so on). Given that structural injustice is caused by the collective sum of many individuals' actions, we need to work together collectively in order to remedy structural injustice. Thus, this project claims that we need to build political solidarity so that we can work together to reduce injustice.

Political solidarity is a familiar term to most of us, but this project aims to get clear on the nature of political solidarity. I argue that solidarity does not only require that we have a shared commitment to addressing an injustice. It also involves certain attitudes held between those in solidarity (i.e. mutual trust, respect, loyalty and support). This project builds on what others have said and argues that solidarity also involves a commitment to the possibility that social-structural processes can be changed (rather than accepting things as they are), requires that we work together in creative ways in order to bring about that change, and entails that we take care of each other as we do that political work together.

Given that political solidarity is needed for addressing structural injustice, this project considers what challenges there are to building solidarity. In other words, it considers what barriers there are to fulfilling the conditions outlined in the description of political solidarity above.

This project is dedicated to
my radically loving community of punks and misfits

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Introduction

I. Motivation and Overview

At the heart of this dissertation is the goal of deepening our theoretical and practical understanding of how we can most effectively foster relationships of genuine political solidarity in resistance to structural injustice. More specifically, the three integrated articles in this thesis ask what challenges and barriers there are to building solidarity in response to widespread structural injustice, and what we might do to work through those challenges and barriers in our practices of collective organizing. In taking up these tasks, I do not focus on what solidarity building might look like in some abstract idealized world but, rather, in our messy nonideal world, one that is constituted by connections of deep interdependence.

I began this project, first, by thinking about complicity—most specifically, complicity in oppressive gender norms. I was interested in better understanding how the preferences we have and the actions we take in the everyday, in the intimate contexts of our interpersonal lives, are informed by and intricately tied up in larger systems of social norms and cultural expectations. I spent a long time, isolated during the peak of COVID-19 lockdowns, reading and thinking about complicity. My focus on complicity in pernicious social norms eventually led me to Iris Marion Young's account of structural injustice. According to Young, structural injustice exists "when social processes put large groups of persons under systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time that these processes enable others to dominate or to have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising capacities available to them" (Young 2011, 52). Moreover, Young's account makes clear that structural injustice occurs, most often, not as a result of intentional wrongdoing but, rather, as a consequence of many individual and institutional actions which fall "for the most part within the limits of accepted rules and norms" (52).

My philosophical investigation of complicity and structural injustice, alongside much of the political discourse that was taking place at the time, revealed that most of us are (in virtue of the social processes and institutions we participate and are embedded in) complicit in a nearly unfathomable number of interconnected systemic/structural problems—i.e., racial inequities, colonization, gender oppression, environmental

destruction, climate change, and so on. This was an unpleasant and overwhelming truth to confront, during an already dark time. So, "what then?" I asked. What are we to *do* with this information? I recognized that understanding the depth and ubiquity of our entanglement in structural injustices was clearly important, but focusing on the concept of complicity *on its own* seemed to offer little by way of illuminating how we could contribute to making the world better, especially in cases where complicity seems impossible to avoid. I could not, for example, simply choose not to be someone who benefits from white privilege, find a place to live that was not located on colonized Indigenous territories, or avoid using all environmentally damaging products—short of ending my existence and participation in this world. Even attempting to avoid complicity and keep morally clean hands by, say, running off to live an isolated life in the woods, cutting ties with modern capitalist society, would (despite the allure of this option) seem to do little to touch the depth of the moral problems that my research on complicity led me to confront.

I felt that I was, morally and philosophically, spinning my wheels with nowhere to go. I knew that understanding complicity was an important piece of the puzzle, but also recognized that wallowing in guilt and grief about one's own complicity for too long, without moving towards action and repair, can become its own form of morally dubious self-indulgence (Bartky 2002). It was then that I began to fully appreciate Iris Marion Young's discussion of the distinction between backward-looking responsibility (i.e. guilt, blame, liability, complicity) and forward-looking responsibility (i.e. obligation, commitment, duty, action) (Young 2011, 96-113). Young makes clear that taking responsibility for structural injustice requires more than identifying guilt and blame where appropriate, but also requires forward-looking action which aims to make tangible impacts towards making the world more just. Finding the language to articulate this point was a true gift. It provided the sense of hope that I needed (and that I think we all need) to continue engaging seriously and honestly with the immense moral problems raised by structural injustice.

I was also, at this time, serving on the executive committee for the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) 610, the teaching assistants' labor union at Western University. We would end our meetings by saying "solidarity forever"—a reference to the traditional trade union song by the same name. Phenomenologically, I felt inspired, supported, and

motivated by the uttering of this phrase. I was also struck by the gravity of this commitment and didn't intend to take it lightly. Solidarity *forever*? What exactly, I asked myself, do we mean when we offer this promise to one another? I turned, then, to thinking more seriously and philosophically about the concept of solidarity. In the face of so much injustice, especially injustices that are beyond the control of any one of us on our own, I felt that solidarity served as a guiding light—one that could help illuminate a path forward for working together to make our world more compassionate and just.

Thus, while complicity is still involved in this project to a great degree, I now focus on a broader range of themes. The four main themes that run through the integrated articles in this dissertation are A. Iris Marion Young on structural injustice, B. responsibility for structural injustice, C. political solidarity, and D. transformative justice and social-political transformation. In this introduction, I will first provide summaries of the three integrated articles, highlighting the novel contributions that each article offers. I will then describe each of the main themes identified above and explain how they are woven throughout.

II. Summaries of Integrated Articles

Chapter 1: "Reckoning with Complicity: Solidarity Building in a Structurally Unjust World"

The first article engages directly with the concept of complicity, but with a focus on what implications our complicity in structural injustice has for our solidarity-building efforts in resistance. I argue, in short, that acting in political solidarity with others involves *reckoning with our complicity* in the injustices we aim to resist. I arrive at this conclusion by considering the tension that exists between ongoing/unexamined complicity in an injustice and one's solidarity in resistance to that injustice.

This article offers three contributions to the literatures on structural injustice, complicity, and solidarity. The first is to clarify how we should understand our responsibility for structural injustice; more specifically, whether our contributions to the social-structural processes with unjust outcomes do, in fact, constitute complicity in the injustice that those processes give rise to. Many who write about complicity take for granted that we are complicit in (i.e. share blameworthiness/guilt for) the injustices we are connected to. There is, however, philosophical disagreement about this claim. In this

article, I engage directly in that debate. I explain Iris Marion Young's argument for the view that we should not interpret our responsibility for structural injustice as a form of complicity but, rather, as a forward-looking responsibility "to join with others who share that responsibility in order to transform the structural processes to make their outcomes less unjust" (96). I then explain opposing views, arguing alongside Corwin Aragon and Alison Jaggar (2018) and Martha Nussbaum (2009) that—although Young is right that much of our responsibility for structural injustice ought to be understood as a responsibility to organize with others in order to remedy injustice—she is mistaken in her claim that we are not blameworthy for the ways we contribute to injustice, regardless of whether those practices fall within generally accepted norms. The main goal here is to further settle this debate and provide justification for my use of the term "complicity" when it comes to structural injustice.

The second contribution of this chapter builds on the claim that we are complicit in structural injustice when we participate in social-structural practices that lead to injustice and aims to determine what our complicity in structural injustice means for our solidarity-building efforts. If being in solidarity against an injustice is generally understood to entail taking action to remedy that injustice then, one might ask, can we really be said to be in solidarity against an injustice when we are acting in ways that constitute complicity in its causes? The problem is, however, that because structural injustice arises as a consequence of many deeply embedded social-structural processes, our options for action are often constrained by the very structures we aim to resist—making it challenging and, in many cases, impossible to avoid complicity in injustice. This is to say, moral purity or "clean hands" in relation to injustice is nearly impossible in a world constituted by injustice that is deeply entrenched in the social-structural processes (i.e. institutions, organizations, physical infrastructures, government policies, economic systems, and so on) that facilitate the flow of modern daily life.

Despite the fact that we cannot reasonably be expected to avoid all complicity in structural injustice, ongoing and unexamined complicity in an injustice can indeed function as a barrier to fostering genuine political solidarity. I argue for this claim, first, by introducing the philosophical accounts of political solidarity that I find most compelling. I draw from these accounts to argue that being in solidarity involves holding a shared

commitment to addressing injustice, not only in theory but in action (Scholz 2008), the cultivation of relational attitudes like mutual respect, mutual trust, and loyalty and mutual support between those in solidarity (Krishnamurthy 2013), and a commitment to the view that structures are not deterministic but can, in fact, be challenged and changed (Young 2011). I then offer an additional condition of political solidarity, novel within the philosophical literature on the topic, and argue that being in solidarity requires creativity and innovation, insofar as acting in solidarity to challenge unjust structures requires that we depart from the scripts or conceptual schemas familiar to us and that we come up with novel solutions to dynamic social problems. I then examine how acts of complicity can inhibit fulfillment of these conditions—i.e. how ongoing/unexamined complicity can demonstrate a lack of commitment to action, can threaten the relational attitudes of mutual respect, trust, loyalty and support, can demonstrate complacency which indicates lack of commitment to the notion that structures can be changed, and reveal a lack of the creative/innovative approach needed for acting in solidarity.

The third contribution of this chapter aims to provide a method for grappling with the challenges that complicity presents for our solidarity-building efforts. Given that the deep embeddedness of structural injustice makes it unrealistic to avoid complicity and, moreover, because structural injustice can only be addressed through collective action (rather than any individual's moral perfection on their own), I argue that being in solidarity with others in resistance to a structural injustice involves *reckoning with complicity.* I develop an account of what reckoning with complicity entails and explain how doing so helps to foster the conditions needed for political solidarity. Reckoning with complicity, I argue, involves 1) honestly facing the ways we contribute to and are complicit in structural injustice, 2) developing an understanding of our social position and privilege in relation to others and the relevant social-structural processes, 3) doing our best to work through the discomfort brought about by recognition of complicity so that we do not become defensive about it or distract focus from the injustice, 4) using the knowledge gained through this recognition to identify what structural conditions need to change, 5) determining what sacrifices we can make to better align our actions with our values and with the political commitments of our solidarity group, and 6) making productive use of any privileges that

we have in order to challenge the social-structural processes that lead to injustice—not only through our individual choices but by engaging in collective action.

Ch. 2 "Transformative Justice and Young's Social Connection Model: Disentangling Punishment from Responsibility"

The second article focuses on Iris Marion Young's practical concern about rhetoric that focuses on guilt, complicity, and blameworthiness for structural injustice. In addition to her conceptual reasons for rejecting complicity as a way to make sense of our responsibility for structural injustice, Young argues that a focus on blame tends to make people defensive, thus inhibiting conversations that will result in collective action. As discussed in Chapter 1, critics argue that Young is mistaken in her claim that we should not interpret our responsibility for structural injustice as, in part, responsibility in the backward-looking sense of guilt for contributing to injustice (Aragon and Jaggar 2018; Nussbaum 2009). While these critics offer compelling reasons for interpreting some of our responsibility as guilt or blame, Young's practical concern about defensiveness remains largely unaddressed. In this article, I contend that this practical concern from Young warrants more serious philosophical and moral consideration than it has thus far received. If we are to continue interpreting some elements of our responsibility for structural injustice as backward-looking blameworthiness, we need to ensure that this language does not inhibit us from fulfilling the important forward-looking elements of our responsibility, i.e. our shared responsibility for organizing with others in order to transform social-structural processes that lead to injustice.

This article makes three primary contributions to the literature on responsibility for structural injustice. The first contribution is to further expand on Young's relatively brief remarks about defensiveness in response to accusations of blameworthiness for structural injustice. She argues, in short, that blame and the defensive responses that accusations of blame tend to invoke, "[divide] people too much, creating mistrust where motivation to cooperate is required" (117). Young highlights something important here. *Responsibility for Justice* (where this discussion appears), was, however, unfinished at the time of Young's unfortunately early death. Fortunately, the book was still published. But some of her arguments remain somewhat underdeveloped. Her discussion of defensiveness is political

discussions is one such area that appears as a relatively rough sketch. However, I believe that the concern Young highlights rings true with many of our experiences. Our contemporary political context is particularly polarizing, and we find that many of our political discussions run the risk of turning into heated political debates, where desire for understanding is often put aside for sake of driving a point home or demonstrating one's own moral virtue. I take up Young's often overlooked concern about defensiveness, and the divisiveness and mistrust that defensiveness lead to, in order to further clarify the problem that Young aims to highlight and moreover, to move our discussion of responsibility for structural injustice beyond theoretical debate and into conversation about how we can address this barrier to fulfilling our forward-looking responsibilities for structural injustice in lived praxis.

I expand on Young's concern about defensiveness by arguing that one of the reasons that tendencies towards defensiveness are so common is because we have institutionally and culturally conflated backward-looking responsibility with punishment. I support this argument by drawing from critiques of punitive justice found in restorative and transformative justice literatures. Punitive justice, in short, is the conventional interpretation of justice exemplified most clearly in our legal/criminal justice system. Punitive justice focuses on identifying individual wrongdoers and delivering punishment in response to wrongs committed (i.e. incarceration, fines, etc. in the context of the legal system). Once the person who has done wrong is punished, we are to assume that justice has been served. This approach to justice is not only taken in the formal system of criminal justice but also in our interpersonal practices of attributing blame. In the less formal context of interpersonal life, we respond punitively to persons' wrongs in the form of censure, ostracization, practices of shaming, or even social exile. As critics of punitive justice point out, however, punishment often does very little to address the root of the problem, to bring about healing for victims, or to prompt the person blamed to take a meaningful sense of accountability (brown et al. 2020; Zehr 1985; Morris 2000; Sered 2019). In the context of structural injustice, our conflation between backward-looking responsibility and punishment has created a culture where persons are often, practically speaking, discouraged from truly acknowledging or admitting our implication in the causes of structural injustice for fear of being singled out for social shame or punishment. This leads

individuals to become defensive when their guilt is pointed out, in order to dodge backward-looking responsibility which has been muddied by the logic of punitive justice.

The second contribution of this chapter draws insight restorative and transformative justice in order to respond to the practical problem of defensiveness in response to claims of backward-looking responsibility for structural injustice. Advocates of restorative and transformative justice make clear that accountability (a form of responsibility involving both backward and forward-looking responsibility) need not be interpreted in a punitive sense. I argue that we can look towards the understanding of accountability found in these literatures in order to help make sense of our responsibility for structural injustice. Moreover, I argue that looking to restorative and transformative justice provides a framework for challenging the widespread logic of punitive justice which will, in turn, help to reduce the frequency of defensiveness in response to accusations of guilt or blameworthiness for structural injustice.

The third (related) contribution of this chapter is that it brings restorative and transformative justice literatures into direct conversation with the literature of social and political philosophy on structural injustice. Much of the literature on restorative justice (which understands crime as a rupture of trust within communities and uses practices of mediation and "healing circles" to restore that trust) is found in legal theory. On the other hand, most literature on transformative justice (which seeks to respond to instances of harm by transforming the underlying social conditions that lead individuals to engage in harmful/criminal behavior) is most often aimed towards lay audiences and social activists. Despite the remarkable compatibility between transformative justice (which builds on restorative justice) and Young's social connection model, I have not encountered any analytic philosophical works on responsibility for structural injustice which invoke the frameworks of restorative or transformative justice. Thus, this chapter is novel in bringing these bodies of literature into direct conversation with one another.

Ch. 3 "Phenomenological "World"-Traveling and Solidarity Building in the Digital Age"

Keeping in line with the overarching goal of this dissertation, the third article also aims to deepen our understanding of how we can most effectively foster relations of

political solidarity with others. In the first two articles, I spent more time directly discussing the nature of structural injustice and responsibility for structural injustice. This article takes for granted that we have a moral responsibility to organize with others in order to address unjust structural conditions and that solidarity provides a means for fulfilling this shared responsibility. Thus, this article takes an even closer look at the conditions of political solidarity and aims to examine barriers to fulfilling those conditions in a particular context: namely, in the "digital age"—our contemporary context where many of our personal, professional, and political interactions with one another are mediated by digital platforms and the algorithms at work on those platforms.

This article also offers three main contributions. The first contribution is to offer a novel account of what I refer to as "whole-hearted political solidarity"—a robust conception of relational political solidarity. I first introduce the accounts of solidarity that I draw from in order to develop this account, briefly explaining why I take these conditions to be important for a robust conception of political solidarity. I then offer an additional condition of solidarity that I have not yet seen articulated within accounts of political solidarity found in analytic philosophy. I argue that political solidarity requires *creativity*, insofar as solidarity involves working together with others to come up with creative solutions for dynamic social problems and for imagining and working towards alternative ways of structuring the world which depart from the conventional structures we aim to change. Taking the conditions of solidarity outlined by the philosophers that I draw from, alongside the condition of creativity that I added, I suggest that we understand *whole-hearted political solidarity* as describing trusting and affect-laden relationships between those who believe that unjust structures can and should be changed, who are committed to working towards this goal with others in creative ways, and who engage in practices of collective care and mutual aid while doing this political work together.

The second central contribution of this article is to clarify the connection between María Lugones' concept of "world"-traveling and solidarity building which has, thus far, not been made very explicit in the philosophical literature on either concept. Lugones describes "world"-traveling as the practice of skillfully and lovingly "traveling" into others' phenomenological constructions of their "worlds". Lugones' concept of "world"-traveling is often taken up in the feminist philosophical literature as a practice for coming

to better understanding those whose identities and experiences differ than our own and, often, as a way for the privileged to come to better understand the experiences of those who are oppressed. Thus, "world"-traveling is often thought of as a means for building solidarity across differences in identity. Despite the fact that Lugones' concept is often taken up in this way, the connection between "world"-traveling and solidarity building, or the ways that "world"-traveling can help to build solidarity across differences, is often taken for granted. After introducing readers to Lugones' "world"-traveling and after introducing my account of whole-hearted political solidarity, I devote a section of this article to deepening our understanding of how "world"-traveling can be used as a practice for building solidarity across differences. Drawing from the scant amount of philosophical literature on this topic (Fulfer 2020; Jones and Fulfer 2023) and offering my own perspectives, I argue that "world"-traveling can productively contribute to meaningful solidarity building by 1) revealing our differences, helping us to recognize privilege and reflect critically on unjust power dynamics, which helps to foster the relational and affective conditions involved in a robust sense of political solidarity and 2) by revealing new possibilities which diverge from conventional and dominant constructions of the world, helping us to engage in the innovative and creative thinking which, I argue, is also involved in a robust conception of political solidarity.

The third contribution that this article aims to make is to reveal the barriers and challenges to "world"-traveling and solidarity building in the "digital age". In taking up this task, I consider the question of whether it is possible to travel to others' "worlds" through interactions mediated by digital technologies like social media platforms. I offer two main worries which cast doubt on the feasibility of using social media for "world"-traveling and meaningful solidarity building. First, I explain how algorithms on social media can reproduce social stereotypes, thus creating gaps in knowledge about communities we aim to join in solidarity with. This can lead to what Mariana Ortega calls "loving, knowing ignorance" (2006) and to "allyship" that is merely performative (Kutlaca and Radke 2022). Second, I discuss the conditions outlined in my account of whole-hearted political solidarity and caution that these cannot be fulfilled through cursory online engagement alone. My aim, however, is not just to cast doubt. Thus, I close by discussing some hopeful possibilities—some ways that social media can, despite the concerns that I

raise, often be used a helpful tool for building relationships with others that may lead to opportunities for "world"-traveling and solidarity building.

III. Main Themes

There are four many themes that run through this dissertation and unify the three integrated articles together. While I do not provide conceptual analysis on each of these themes within all three of the standalone articles, the values and insights involved in each of these themes underlie my philosophical approach within all three of the articles. These four themes are A: Iris Marion Young on Structural Injustice, B: Responsibility for Structural Injustice, C: Relational Political Solidarity, and D: Transformative Justice and Social-Political Transformation. These themes are, themselves, quite connected to one another, but I will explain each of them in turn.

A. Iris Marion Young on Structural Injustice

The first main theme that runs through each of the integrated articles is the concept of *structural injustice*—more specifically, Iris Marion Young's account of structural injustice offered in her monograph *Responsibility for Justice* (Young 2011). I focus on structural injustice specifically, rather than justice more broadly construed, because structural injustice represents a particularly pernicious and insidious form of injustice. It is by virtue of the fact that the causes of structural injustice are embedded in the basic structures of our society that structural injustice is particularly challenging to address. It, thus, warrants focused philosophical and moral attention. Once we have a better understanding of the mechanisms that cause and reproduce structural injustice, we will be better positioned to understand how we can effectively respond to and mitigate the harmful impacts of structural injustice.

Iris Marion Young's account of structural injustice endorses and expands on political philosopher, John Rawls', claim that the primary subject of justice is the "basic structure of society" (Rawls 1971, 7). What Rawls means by the relatively abstract term "basic structure" is "the way in which major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation" or, more specifically still, the political institutions, economic systems, and social arrangements

that underlie a society (Rawls 1971, 7). The basic structure of society is the primary subject of justice (rather than, say, individual action) because, Rawls says, the "effects [of the basic structure] are so profound and present from the start". They are "pervasive" and affect all individuals' "initial chances in life". Put another way, the basic structure "contains various social positions" and individuals born into these different positions "have different expectations of life determined, in part, by the political system as well as by economic and social circumstances" (Rawls 1971, 7).

Unlike Rawls, Young focuses not on universal principles of justice but, rather, on the mechanisms and processes by which the basic structure of society give rise to unjust outcomes. Although many social theorists and empirical researchers appeal to the notion or metaphor of "structure", it is a notion that is notoriously hard to pin down (Young 2011, 52-53). Young, thus, refers most often to "social-structural processes" rather than "structure" more generally, highlighting not only the breadth but also the dynamic nature of the institutions and social practices that we refer to as "structures" (Young 2011, 53). What Young is referring to by social-structural processes, similarly to Rawls discussion of structure, are the laws and policies of our major social institutions and organizations, such as government agencies, institutions of education, law and so on, economic markets, social institutions like the family, as well as less formalized social norms and conventions.

It is not any one of these processes, on their own, that give rise to structural injustice but, rather, the way that these broad and often abstract social-structural processes interact together in ways that shape and determine the opportunities we have available to us for action. Individuals differently situated (in different social positions) in relation to all of these social-structural processes will experience different outcomes for their lives' prospects and pursuits. I provide a fuller explanation of the nature of structural injustice in the articles (where appropriate) but, as noted at the start, Young's account says that structural injustice "exists when social processes put large groups of persons under systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time that these processes enable others to dominate or to have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising capacities available to them" (Young 2011, 52). This is to say that disadvantages or barriers that individuals face, when aiming to access resources or opportunities for developing and exercising their capacities,

are not one-off or arbitrary but are, rather, disadvantages/barriers that individuals face because of their particular social position in relation to a broad range of social-structural processes.

What makes structural injustice a *distinct* type of moral wrong, compared to "wrongs of individual interaction" (i.e. wrongs that are directly traceable to just one or a few persons), is the fact that it "occurs as a consequence of many individuals and institutions acting to pursue their particular goals and interests, for the most part within the limits of accepted rules and norms" (Young 2011, 52). Structural injustice is challenging to identify because its causes are embedded in a wide range of social-structural processes, not arising from one or a few clearly identifiable sources. It is helpful, here, to compare structural injustice to the concept of "oppression", which is now widely understood as systemic or structural in nature. In Marilyn Frye's influential account, she compares oppression to a birdcage (Frye 1983). When we look myopically, only at each individual wire of a birdcage, we cannot possibly understand why the bird inside could not just fly around that wire and escape the cage. It is only when we step back and see how each individual wire interlocks together, making up the larger structure of the birdcage, that we can see the restrictive nature of the cage as a whole (Frye 1983). Similarly, it is only when we see how the many social-structural processes interact together, that we can come to understand how those processes produce, not only one-off barriers or an unfortunate lack of specific opportunities but, rather, a "systemic threat of domination or deprivation" (Young 2011, 52).

Additionally, Kwame Ture (writing, then, under the name Stokely Carmichael) and Charles Hamilton coined the term "institutional racism" in their book *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (Carmichael and Hamilton 1967). Here, the authors describe how racism does not only function through overt interactions and expressions of prejudice but is also maintained at an institutional level through policies and norms that uphold the status quo of white supremacy. Young's attention to structural injustice has helped us to make further inroads in better understanding institutional sources of oppression and injustice—highlighting the fact that oppression and injustice are the result, not only of individual wrongs, but of unjust background conditions which we often take for granted.

I focus, specifically, on Young's account of structural injustice because hers is the most influential and thorough account of structural injustice within the philosophical literature. Young's book, *Responsibility for Justice,* has led to a substantial body of secondary literature, much of which takes up Young's account of structural injustice in order to apply it to a specific form of injustice, such as climate injustice, healthcare inequities, gender disparities, and even, now, algorithmic injustice (Eckersely 2016; Larrére 2018; Gould 2018; Lin & Chen 2022; Kasirzedeh 2022). Most who challenge Young's view do so on the basis of her account of *responsibility* for structural injustice. Her account of structural injustice itself is, however, widely accepted. This is to say that her account is *the* account of structural injustice which philosophers, sociologists, and other thinkers on the topic most often refer to when invoking the concept.

I take up Young's account of structural injustice most directly in Chapters 1 and 2. In those two chapters, I describe her account of structural injustice and her discussion of social-structural processes in depth—offering my own examples of structural injustice in order to highlight the constraining nature of social-structural processes and to show that it is, quite often, not possible to avoid participating in and thus further reinforcing those processes. Although I do not offer direct discussion of the nature of structural injustice is Chapter 3, Young's understanding of structural injustice and social-structural processes runs in the background. It is only through understanding the nature of structural injustice, the fact that it arises as a result of many social-structural processes interacting together and the fact that these social-structural are only maintained through the individual actions that contribute to these processes, that I have come to understand the moral importance of solidarity—the concept which constitutes the heartbeat of this project.

B. Responsibility for Structural Injustice

This brings me, now, to the next main theme which integrates the three articles together: *responsibility* for structural injustice. It on this topic that Iris Marion Young offers her most influential and novel account. It is also in response to her account of responsibility for structural injustice that Young has garnered the most criticism.

As previously discussed, Young distinguishes between backward and forward-looking responsibility (Young 2011). The most conventional way to interpret responsibility

within the legal and moral context is backward-looking responsibility. Under this interpretation, responsibility is understood as guilt or blameworthiness for something that one has done in the past. Young refers to this interpretation as the "liability model" of responsibility. This is, Young makes clear, an important and appropriate way to understand responsibility in many contexts, such as in the legal context and in situations where an individual has wronged someone directly.

She argues, however, that the liability model is unsuitable for making sense of our responsibility for *structural* injustice. Young offers several conceptual reasons is support of the view. I will not spell all of her reasons out here but the *central* reason she argues that the liability model is unfit to interpret our responsibility for injustices that are structural is because the liability model focuses on identifying direct causal connection between an agent (either an individual agent or collective agent like an organization) and the circumstance for which responsibility is sought. The problem is, however, that "it is in the nature of such structural processes that their potentially harmful effects cannot be traced directly to any particular contributors to the process" (Young 2011, 100). This is because the outcomes of structural processes are collective in nature, such that each individual action which contributes to the production or reproduction of those processes are but small drops in the bucket, so to speak. This is to say, no individual on their own can be accurately said to have directly caused some structural outcome—because those outcomes are the result of many individuals participating in a great many structural processes and a result of how those processes interact together. Moreover, Young argues, individuals who participate in social-structural processes ought not be *blamed* for contributing to those processes in the same way as someone who breaks the law or *intentionally* brings about harm, because most of the actions that contribute to the reproduction of structural processes conform to generally accepted rules, norms, and practices (Young 2011, 100). In other words, on Young's view, most individuals who contribute to structural processes ought not be blamed because the actions that contribute to those processes are not actions normally thought of as wrong or blameworthy.

Given that, on her view, the liability model is not suited to make sense of our responsibility for structural injustice, Young argues that we need a *different* model of responsibility. She turns, then, to another way that the term "responsibility" is invoked—

i.e. responsibility understood as a forward-looking obligation, commitment, or duty *to do something*. She argues that we *are* responsible for structural injustice in virtue of the fact that we participate in and are connected to the structural processes that lead to injustice, not in the sense of blameworthiness but, rather, in the sense that our connection to those processes generates a forward-looking obligation to address structural injustice. She refers to this understanding of responsibility as the "social connection model" of responsibility. On this model, "[b]eing responsible in relation to structural injustice means that one has an obligation to join with others who share that responsibility in order to transform the structural processes to make their outcomes less unjust" (Young 2011, 96).

While most agree with Young that we do have this forward-looking responsibility to join together in collective action with others in order to change structural conditions and mitigate the impacts of structural injustice, many disagree with her that we ought not be considered blameworthy or guilty for contributing to those processes (Aragon and Jaggar 2018; Nussbaum 2009). The fact that such actions fall within generally accepted norms and practices, critics argue, does not excuse us of blame. "'Going along' with unjust processes", Corwin Aragon and Alison Jaggar argue, "is not morally neutral, regardless of our intention; instead it reinforces and normalizes those processes" (Aragon and Jaggar 2018). Contributing to and normalizing those processes, they argue, amounts to a form of *complicity*, a term which Young rejects in her account of responsibility.

As mentioned, I agree on this point with Young's critics. We are blameworthy for the ways we contribute to structural processes and this constitutes a form of complicity (or shared blameworthiness). Although Young is right that much of our focus in assigning responsibility for structural injustice ought to be forward-looking in nature (insofar as the future is where we can enact tangible change), looking backwards provides important information about *what* needs to change as we work towards building a more just future. Young acknowledges this point herself, saying that her social connection model (while primarily forward-looking in nature) does need to look backwards for this instrumental purpose (Young 2011, 109). She, nonetheless, rejects that this backward-looking element of responsibility be interpreted as a form of complicity, guilt, or blame.

I aim, in this project, to strike the right balance between interpretations of responsibility that focus too narrowly on blame and Young's view which seems to reject

blameworthiness too quickly. I understand responsibility for structural injustice as, thus, involving elements of both backward and forward-looking responsibility. In my view, responsibility for structural injustice is constituted, on one hand, by our complicity or blameworthiness for contributing to structural processes with unjust outcomes and, on the other hand, by a moral obligation to join in collective action with others in order to transform unjust structural processes and work towards building a more just and compassionate world.

This understanding of responsibility for structural injustice is woven through and informs my arguments in all three chapters. In Chapter 1, I engage in the debate between Young and her critics directly, arguing for the view that part of our responsibility for structural injustice ought to be understood as a form of complicity. Nonetheless, taking her social connection model to heart, I keep focus on the fact that much of our responsibility for structural injustice is a forward-looking responsibility to transform unjust social processes. Given that the causes of structural injustice are collective in nature, structural injustice cannot be addressed by any one individual on their own, even if one could somehow be successful in avoiding all complicity (an unrealistic feat in our deeply interconnected and globalized moral landscape). In order to fulfill the forward-looking elements of our responsibility for structural injustice, we *have* to work together in collective action. Thus, understanding solidarity as the type of relationship that facilitates collective action, I contend that part of our responsibility for structural injustice amounts to a responsibility to *build solidarity with others*. This is why I focus, in all three chapters, on the practical challenges and barriers to building political solidarity, because challenges and barriers to building solidarity can inhibit our ability to fulfill our forward-looking responsibilities for structural injustice.

C. Political Solidarity

I have, thus far, described the themes of structural injustice and responsibility for structural injustice, explaining that I understand our responsibility for structural injustice as, on one hand, backward-looking guilt or complicity for contributing to injustice and, on the other hand, a forward-looking responsibility to organize with others in order to

transform social-structural processes that lead to unjust outcomes. This, then, led up to my claim that our responsibility for structural injustice involves an obligation to cultivate political solidarity with others, which describes the kind of relationship that enables us to work together in collective action towards our political goals. I will now explain how I understand political solidarity and how this understanding is woven through the dissertation as a whole.

The philosophical literature on the concept of political solidarity is relatively small. I have not taken up or directly engaged with every account of political solidarity on offer but have focused on the accounts I have found to be most compelling. In particular, I am most interested in the accounts that provide insight on how we can foster the kinds of relationships with others than deepen our understanding and appreciation of their experiences, needs, and the means by which we can effectively work together.[1] Sally Scholz, in her book *Political Solidarity* provides a comprehensive inquiry into the concept of political solidarity, understanding it, in short, as a moral relation that unites individuals together on the basis of their commitment to respond to a particular situation of injustice or oppression (Scholz 2008, 51). I invoke her account because it provides a firm basic conception of political solidarity on which to build further.

Despite the fact that is, by comparison to others such as Scholz', a quite brief analysis of political solidarity, I am most philosophically drawn to the account that Meena Krishnamurthy offers in her paper, "Political Solidarity, Justice and Public Health" (2013). Krishnamurthy argues that political solidarity is relational in a deeper sense than other accounts, such as Scholz', make clear. In other words, solidarity is not *just* a shared commitment towards a political goal but is necessarily characterized by certain relational attitudes held towards one another. While we should not understand solidarity as a mere feeling or sentiment of connection or unity with others, the affect involved in particular kinds of attitudes is a defining feature of the kinds of relations that we refer to as political

[1] One theory of solidarity that I do not engage with in this thesis is that offered by Avery Kolers in *A Moral Theory of Solidarity* (2016). Kolers argues that solidarity ought not be thought of as, primarily a feeling, affect, or sentiment, but rather as deontological duty. More specifically, he argues that solidarity involves a duty to defer to the judgement of those who suffer gravest injustice. While I agree with Kolers that we do have a moral obligation to build solidarity with others, I do not find his deontological focus particularly compelling for my own philosophical aims. I am more interested in investigating, not when we have a duty of deference but, rather, what the *relationship* of solidarity involves more broadly.

solidarity. We would not, for example, understand someone as being in political solidarity if they held a picket sign in protest *only* out of a sense of obligation or if their commitment to political action was only taken up as a response to social pressure to do so. Krishnamurthy contends that we would hardly consider an individual to be in political solidarity if they felt *no* sense of connection or bond with those they claimed to be in solidarity with (130).

Thus, Krishnamurthy puts forward the claim that individuals can be said to stand in a relationship of political solidarity when that relationship is "characterized by the attitudes of collective identification, mutual respect, mutual trust and loyalty and mutual support" (131). In the ways that I take up Krishnamurthy's account, I focus most centrally on the attitudes of mutual respect, mutual trust, and mutual support for the following reasons. Mutual respect is an important part of being in political solidarity because the presence of mutual respect means that we will treat each other well, earnestly listen to each other's thoughts, needs, and perspectives, even amidst disagreements which are likely to occur as we deliberate about complex political problems together. Mutually respecting one another means that we are not reproducing unjust social hierarchies or inequitable power dynamics within the solidarity group itself or are, at least, working to identify and resist such hierarchies within the group. Mutual trust enables us to rely on one another in times of need and vulnerability. It means that we can approach discussions, even discussions that involve disagreement, with a shared understanding that we have each other's best interest, and the political interest of the solidarity group, at heart. The presence of trust means that we know we are on the same team. We do not need to be on guard or worry that, if we make a mistake or have a gap in our knowledge, we will be shamed, abandoned, or otherwise turned into an enemy. This means that we can, together, engage in the creative work of trying different approaches, which may or may not turn out to be effective. Trust offers the relational comfort that, even if we do not always get things right, we can keep working together. Mutual support, I believe, is both an attitude and an action. It is an action that follows from the attitudes of mutual respect and mutual trust. When relationships are mutually supportive, individuals in those relationships will be willing to show up for others and for the political cause of the solidarity group even when doing so comes at some cost to oneself

(Krishnamurthy 2018, 132). It entails support for those who are impacted by the injustice we aim to address and support between those involved in solidarity movements together.

María José Méndez' account of "embodied solidarity" emphasizes this point about mutual support. She argues that solidarity involves, not mere expressions of empathy for abstract others, but involves engaging in practices of collective care (Méndez 2023). What "collective care" entails will depend on the needs of those involved, which is another reason why the relational attitudes listed above are so important—so that we can know each other in particularity and can be responsive to each other's needs as we continue to work together. As Myisha Cherry discusses in her account of solidarity care, maintaining awareness of rampant social injustices is emotionally and spiritually burdensome (2020). Moreover, many of us involved in political activism are, in some way, marginalized ourselves. The fact that the term "political struggle" is often used to refer to political/activist movements is not coincidence. It can often feel like that—a struggle, as we hustle to make ends meet in our own lives. The practices of collective care that individuals involved in solidarity movements engage in is a sustaining force. It sustains us to keep pressing on even when we do encounter barriers in our political work and in our lives more generally.

I also draw on Iris Marion Young's brief remarks on solidarity while working towards developing my own account. Young puts forward the claim that being in solidarity requires that, rather than accepting social structures as they are or seeing them as "set in stone", we take existing social structures as possibilities. That we understand structures as, in fact, socially constructed, regardless of how embedded they may be. Solidarity requires that we remain committed to the idea that "*perhaps* things can be improved" (Young 2011, 120). This condition which I incorporate into my account of whole-hearted political solidarity is especially important because as soon as we say, "this is just the way things are", then we contribute to making that our reality. If we see structures as unchangeable, it would be irrational to continue trying to change them. This type of complacency is contagious and can bring our forward motion to a rapid halt. It deflates our motivation to radically restructure our world, stopping us in our tracks.

As described in the summary of Chapter 3, I offer an additional condition which informs my understanding of political solidarity. Inspired further by this condition of

solidarity and drawing from my own lived experience in activist communities and the insight gained from conversations taking place in those communities, I put forward the claim that solidarity also requires that we take a creative approach to addressing injustice. Acting in solidarity involves imagining alternate ways of structuring the world, ways which depart from the deeply embedded structures we are trying to change. This requires innovation, given that we cannot rely on familiar scripts from the dominant culture. It requires courage because coming up with alternatives to dominant structures and means for pursuing those alternatives will require trial and error. We cannot know what will work and what will not work until we, first, try. We then take the information gained through that process of trial and error and correct course as needed.

Thus, as previously discussed, I put forward an account of *whole-hearted political solidarity*, which I suggest we understand as describing trusting and affect-laden relationships between those who believe that unjust structures can and should be changed, who are committed to working towards this goal with others in creative ways, and who engage in practices of collective care and mutual aid while doing this political work together. We might worry that this is an exceptionally demanding account of political solidarity and that it is not possible to cultivate relationships of this depth with everyone and in relation to all worthwhile political causes. This is true. We are, after all, finite beings with limited time, energy, capacities, and resources. I suggest that we understand solidarity, not as a clearly demarcated category but, rather, as falling along a continuum. Solidarity, much like the relational attitudes involved in solidarity, admit of degrees. Whole-hearted solidarity, as the name connotes, is a particularly involved and robust form of solidarity. It is a form we can strive to in causes we are particularly called towards, but it is not the *only* worthwhile form of solidarity. We might think of the relational conditions, such as mutual trust, not as black and white conditions which are either fulfilled or not but, rather, as continuums where there is some "threshold" where we have enough trust to function together as a solidarity group. We might not have trust for one another in every domain and to the great possible degree, but we can focus on cultivating sufficient trust for cooperating together in our shared political goals.

This understanding of solidarity just outlined is woven throughout all three chapters. In Chapter 1, I focus on the conditions offers by Scholz', Krishnamurthy's, and

Young's account, and add my condition about creativity in political solidarity. I discuss how to is that the presence of ongoing and unexamined complicity can inhibit those conditions. I then, offer my account of what it means to *reckon with complicity*, explaining how it is that reckoning with complicity can affirm our mutual respect, trust, and support, and our commitment to the possibility that structures *can* be changed. I do not discuss the exact nature of political solidarity directly in Chapter 2 but, rather, discuss our forward-looking responsibilities to join in collective action with others. As stated, I understand political solidarity as the kind of relationship that enables, supports, and sustains this kind of collective action. Thus, although I invoke the term "solidarity" less frequently in this chapter, it undergirds my discussion of responsibility for structural injustice. It is because I understand solidarity as deeply relational, that I take the problems of defensiveness and mistrust and political debates to be so important and worth serious discussion. In Chapter 3, I offer the most thorough discussion of the nature of political solidarity and flesh out, in this chapter, my account of whole-hearted political solidarity.

D. Transformative Justice and Social-Political Transformation

The fourth theme that runs through the three integrated articles is the framework of transformative justice and the goal of bringing about social-political transformation. While transformative justice and social-political transformation are not one and the same, they are deeply related to one another. Transformative justice provides an approach for responding to particular instances of violence, harm, and abuse but, by taking structural conditions into account, it falls within the broader category of frameworks that aim to bring about social-political transformation. The notion of social-political transformation acknowledges that we cannot start over with a "clean slate". If we want a better world, we must transform the material and social reality that we find ourselves faced with. By way of introducing this theme, I will, first, begin by briefly describing restorative and transformative justice. I will then explain how the values of transformative justice and the notion of social-political transformation are woven throughout all three integrated articles.

Transformative justice, broadly speaking, is a framework and approach for responding to instances of violence, harm, and abuse, without creating more violence, harm, and abuse (Mingus 2019). In other words, transformative justice aims to provides an

alternative to the framework of punitive justice. Punitive justice, as described in the summary of Chapter 2, refers to the notion that justice is "served" once someone who has caused harm receives punishment for that wrong. Punitive justice is often (though not always) interpreted as a form of retributive justice, according to which punishment is intrinsically justified by appeal to the principle of retributivism (i.e. those who cause suffering "deserve' to experience suffering in return, as repayment for the suffering their actions have caused) (Hoskins and Duff 2024). The spirit of retributivism can, in other words, be captured by the idiom "an eye for an eye". Some of those who seek to defend punitive justice claim that the enactment of punishment can be justified on non-retributivist grounds by, for example, appealing to the instrumental function that punishment can serve (i.e. punishment expresses the wrongness of the crime to the perpetrator or to the general public, thus deterring future criminal activity) (Hoskins and Duff 2024).

What reason then, one might ask, is there for seeking an alternative to this familiar system of justice, especially if it is meant to serve the important function of deterring crime and harm? In short, as I discuss in Chapter 2, punishments like incarceration do not seem to do particularly well at fulfilling this aim. Though reliable and consistent data on rates of recidivism (i.e. re-incarceration after release) is challenging to track down (and varies greatly depending on factors such as the offender's age, sex/gender, Indigenous/non-Indigenous identity, prior convictions, and length of sentence), it is generally agreed upon by both critics and supporters of punitive justice that recidivism rates are high (World Population Review). The problem is that carceral punishment does not address the social problems at the root of criminal behavior. In the words of abolitionist powerhouse, Angela Davis, "[h]omelessness, unemployment, drug addiction, mental illness, and illiteracy are only a few of the problems that disappear from public view when the human beings contending with them are relegated to cages" (Davis 1998).

Restorative justice (which transformative justice builds on) aims to look beyond the myopic focus on an individual harm or crime—seeing individuals, not as isolated agents who commit wrongs out of the blue, but as persons embedded in particular communities and interpersonal contexts. Moreover, harmful or criminal behavior is understood, not only as harming the direct victim, but as disrupting trust within the broader community. Restorative justice practices, then, do not focus centrally on allotting punishment but,

rather, on restoring the trust that was damaged by the behaviors or actions in questions, most often through victim-offender mediation or "healing circles" (Chartland and Horn 2016). Rooted in the cultural values of community and kinship found in Indigenous legal traditions, these practices aim to uncover how the community can support the healing of both the victim and the offender (Charland and Horn 2016)—rather than relying on brute punishment.

Transformative justice takes the values of restorative justice one step further. Canadian Quaker and transformative justice advocate, Ruth Morris, says that the concept of restorative justice implies that we previously had justice which, after a wrong was committed, needs to be restored. But "most offenders are, more than the average person is, victims of distributive injustice. Do we want to restore offender", Morris asks, "to the marginalized, enraged, disempowered condition most were in" leading up to the offense (2000, 19)? Once again, this seems to offer little by way of addressing the root of the issue—the social and structural problems that lead most offenders to resort to crime or to engage in harmful behavior in the first place. Transformative justice is, in short, a prison abolitionist framework "that understands systems such as prisons, police and I.C.E. as sites where enormous amounts of violence take place and as systems that were created to be inherently violent in order to maintain social control" (Mingus 2019). The work of transformative justice focuses on building communities' capacities and skills for responding to harm without creating more harm (i.e. without relying on calling the police/prisons/punishment). Moreover, transformative justice aims, not just to respond to individual instances of harm in more compassionate ways, but also to prevent future instances of harm by "[transforming] the conditions which help to create acts of violence or make them possible." This often "includes transforming harmful oppressive dynamics, our relationships to each other, and our communities at large" (Mingus 2019). This might mean, for example, organizing workshops that help us unpack oppressive social norms, assumptions, and dynamics (such as, for example, norms around gender that lead to male aggression and diminish women's agency), advocating or crowdfunding for more community supports and material resources that aim to address the social and psychological roots of harmful behavior (such as, for example, advocating for better unemployment/disability/welfare supports or more resources for those struggling with

mental health). Transformative justice can be thought of as an approach that focuses on "creating justice together" (Mingus 2019).

Although I do not appeal to transformative justice by name in Chapters 1 and 3, the values at the heart of transformative justice underlie all three chapters. I understand these values to include 1) a commitment to respond to harms without creating more harm (i.e. without relying on punitive interpretations of accountability/responsibility—without defaulting to use of shame and social ostracization for our political goals), 2) a recognition of the fact that individuals who commit blameworthy actions are, most often, not doing so with malicious desire but, rather, because of the cultural, structural, material, and circumstantial contexts that have shaped their values, priorities, choices, access to resources, skills, and capacities and 3) a focus on the moral importance of transforming our culture at large, and 4) affirming the value of community building and community organizing as means through which we can transform the conditions that lead to injustice and harm (at both an individual and structural level).

This lens has powerfully shaped the attitude that I have taken throughout the thesis as a whole, shaping the spirit of the work. While I contend that we are, in fact, blameworthy for contributing to/reinforcing unjust social-structural processes, at no point in this thesis do I suggest that we deal with those who are blameworthy through punitive measures like social shaming, coercion, or ostracization (which are common practices in our polarized political climate). Rather than taking a scolding approach for the ways we fall short (for example, about complicity in Chapter 1 and performative allyship in Chapter 3), I have focused on how we can use recognition of those pitfalls in order to address the root of the problem, working together to bring about positive change through the cultivation of relationships of political solidarity. Underlying my thought here is Sandra Bartky's assertion that engaging in political action will change us—that personal and political transformation are deeply tied up in one another (2002, 148). Thus, the values of transformative justice outlined above, alongside Young's discussions of responsibility for structural injustice, have motivated my aim that runs through all three chapters—the aim of deepening our understanding of political solidarity as a means for bringing about transformation of our social-political realities and of ourselves.

IV. A Brief Concluding Note

Our world is truly rife with struggle, pain, suffering, and injustice. I have aimed, throughout this thesis, to make clear that structural injustice is collective in nature and have beckoned us to recognize the simple truth that we *have* to work together in order to address the deep roots of the moral problems caused by structural injustice. We cannot do this by making enemies of one another but, rather, by finding ways to meet each other where we are at so that we can engage in politically productive discussions, even (perhaps especially) amidst disagreements and differences in perspective which challenge us to deepen the nuance with which we can articulate our views.

The practice of philosophy is, for me, not merely a fun intellectual game or a way to show off our cleverness, but a means through which I have been able to make better sense of this dizzying world and my own place within it. This is to say, I am using the methodology of analytic philosophy to discuss solidarity so that we can, not only understand it better on a theoretical level, but actually be better prepared to embody the virtues and values of solidarity in order to make our world more just and conducive to flourishing.

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Chapter 1
Reckoning with Complicity in Structural Injustice as a Solidarity-Building Practice

1.0—Introduction

We are deeply interconnected with one another, and the nature of this interconnectedness is morally complex. Simply by participating in the world, we become tangled up in complex webs of social, cultural, and economic processes—and some of these processes give rise to structural injustice. Some contend, stipulate, or take for granted that we are *complicit* in structural injustice when we participate in social-structural processes that contribute to bringing about that injustice (Knowles 2021; Aragon and Jaggar 2018; Shotwell 2016). But this same interconnectedness also opens up opportunities for resistance—opportunities for building *solidarity* that aims to transform social-structural processes that lead to injustice. At first glance, these two facets of our interdependence seem to be in tension or, perhaps, at odds with each other. The central purpose of this chapter is to grapple with that tension.

More specifically, I aim to uncover what challenges complicity presents for our solidarity-building efforts in resistance to structural injustice. Can we genuinely be in solidarity against an injustice while complicit in its causes? In response to this question, I aim to demonstrate that complicity *can* indeed disrupt relations of political solidarity with others. But, in our deeply interconnected and globalized moral landscape it is not always possible to avoid complicity. Our actions are often constrained by the very structures we aim to resist. While any politically productive account of solidarity cannot require moral purity or an absence of complicity, I argue that political solidarity does require that we *reckon with our complicity* in the injustice(s) we aim to resist. Reckoning with complicity, I argue, involves first, honestly facing the ways we contribute to and are complicit in structural injustice (accepting blameworthiness for the ways we contribute to injustice), developing an understanding of one's social position and privilege in relation to others and the relevant social-structural processes, doing our best to work through the discomfort brought about by recognizing our complicity, using the knowledge gained through this recognition to identify what structural conditions need to change, determining what sacrifices we can make to better align our actions with our values and with the political

commitments of our solidarity group, and using privilege we may have to challenge unjust social structures.

This article will proceed as follows. In section 1.1, I describe structural injustice and demonstrate how it is that social-structural processes constrain our actions, often making it challenging to avoid contributing to those processes. Then, in section 1.2, I explain a philosophical disagreement that exists between Iris Marion Young (2011) and others—especially Corwin Aragon and Alison Jaggar (2018)—about whether our participation in unjust social-structural processes does in fact amount to complicity in that injustice. Young says "no," while Aragon and Jaggar say "yes." I defend the latter's position that we are "structurally complicit" when we use our "agency in ways that reinforce the unjust social structures […], regardless of [our] conscious intentions" (449). In section 1.3, I discuss how it is that complicity can inhibit solidarity building, by undermining the relational attitudes needed for building meaningful political solidarity with others. Then, in section 1.4, I develop an account of what it means to *reckon with complicity* and explain how doing so helps us to cultivate the relational attitudes needed for political solidarity. I conclude by briefly reflecting on the need for an understanding of solidarity that makes room for our imperfections.

1.1—Structural Injustice

Over the last few decades, there has been an increase of public and academic discussion about *structural injustice.* The Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, in particular, brought wide-spread attention to the specific injustice of structural or systemic racism, highlighting how anti-Black racism does not *only* occur through instances of direct prejudice or discrimination but, also as a result of a broad range of institutional, historical, and social conditions that make Black individuals disproportionally vulnerable to violence and socio-economic disadvantage. Making the distinction between structural sources of injustice and instances of individual wrongs is important because it allows us to attend to the patterns of social and institutional injustice that can disappear from view when we focus on distinct individual wrongs. Nonetheless, as Young contends, social-structural processes

are produced and reproduced only through individual actions.[2] This means that, although structures are deeply engrained and cannot be changed by any singular individual, they *can* be challenged and changed through collective action (Young 2011, 111-113).

In this first section, I describe the nature of structural injustice as understood by Young, whose work on this topic is highly influential.[3] As Young argues, structural injustice occurs when social-structural processes disadvantage some while privileging others, on the basis of their social position in relation to those structures. I discuss how it is that these processes constrain our actions, often making it challenging to avoid participating in the injustice, and I highlight how the social positions that individuals occupy within social-structural frameworks and hierarchies determine what options or opportunities are feasibly available to them. In other words, the structures and frameworks that give rise to injustice can restrict our ability to avoid contributing to those structures, and the range of opportunities that individuals have to do otherwise is informed by how much privilege they have in relation to those structures and to other people.

Young says that structural injustice exists when social-structural processes interact together in ways that put groups of people "under systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities" (2011, 52). This means that those who are in disadvantaged positions, in relation to social structures and each other, have fewer opportunities and options available to them to pursue their interests and meet their needs, compared to those who occupy relatively privileged social positions. This type of social disadvantage is not random or arbitrary, but a culmination of many diffuse and interlocking processes that interact together in consequential ways. The processes and practices that make up the basic structures of our societies include formal laws, institutional

[2] Though structures are produced/reproduced through individual actions, the distinction between the individual and the structural is important to make. The injustices that result from structural processes can be challenging to perceive and identify unless we expand our perspective and take a macro view of how those many processes interact together. Highlighting the structural nature of oppression, Marilyn Frye offers the analogy of a bird cage. If we were only to look, myopically, at each individual wire of birdcage, we would not be able to see why the bird could not just fly around that wire and escape. It is not until we look at the birdcage, as a whole, that we can see how the many individual wires come together to make up an interlocking structure that keeps the bird constrained and trapped within (Frye 1983).

[3] Some works that invoke Young's account of structural injustice and/or her accompanying "social connection model" of responsibility for structural injustice include Parekh 2011, Eckersley 2016, Larrère 2018, Gould 2018, Lin and Po-Hsuan 2022, and Kasirzadeh 2022.

policies and practices, economic and industrial processes, as well as informal but widely shared social norms and interpersonal practices.

In offering this account, Young distinguishes structural injustice from what she calls "wrongs of individual action" (2011, 45-46). Wrongs of individual interaction refer to cases where a person, policy, or institution wrongs someone in a direct way (e.g., assaults them, utters a racist slur at them, or discriminates against them through direct exclusion). In such cases, there is a direct causal connection between an individual agent and the wrong. Wrongs of this kind typically violate generally accepted rules or norms. For example, a landlord who refuses to rent an apartment to a couple because they are gay, despite laws prohibiting this type of discrimination, commits a wrong of individual interaction. Such wrongs contribute to structural injustice but, as Young's account makes clear, those who cause them (i.e., wrongs of individual interaction) are not the only contributors to structurally unjust outcomes. Rather, structural injustice occurs as the cumulative consequence of many institutional policies, economic processes, informal social norms, and interpersonal social practices interacting together in ways that lead to unforeseen consequences or to predictable but unintended consequences.

To illustrate the types of social-structural processes that can together lead to unjust outcomes, Young offers the story of a woman named Sandy, a single mother who becomes gradually vulnerable to homelessness. In this example, the landlord who owns the building where Sandy and her two children live decides to sell it so it can be developed into high end condominiums, which Sandy will not be able to afford. She looks for rental options in the suburban neighborhood near her retail job at the mall and finds that there are few within her budget. So, she applies for a subsidized housing program but is told that the there is a two-year long waiting list for the program. Without reliable public transit options between the suburban mall where she works and the neighborhoods where rentals are more affordable, Sandy decides she must put some of her limited savings towards a vehicle. With her move-out date looming near, she settles on one of the few housing options she can find. It is an apartment with one bedroom, which her children will share, while she sleeps on a fold-out bed in the living room. It is still not very affordable, but she sees no other option. There is, however, one more hurdle. The landlord of this apartment requires several months' rent upfront as a security deposit—a common practice in the modern rental market.

Having used her savings for the down payment on a cheap vehicle, she does not have the funds for this rental deposit upfront and is now realistically facing the prospect of homelessness (thus also becoming vulnerable to losing custody of her children[4]).

As Young says, most of us will react to this story with the feeling that something is unfair or unjust (45). We feel that there should be more options available to someone in Sandy's position and it is wrong that there are not. However, no one who interacted with Sandy behaved maliciously or wronged her directly. Young constructed the Sandy's story so that it excludes any wrongs of individual interaction. Sandy's risk of becoming homeless results as a consequence of many social, institutional, and economic practices interacting together in ways that no one intends. These include the abstract economic processes that influence housing prices, economic supply and demand, affluent professionals moving into the city and subsequently inflated housing prices, and standard landlord/tenant practices. They also include governmental and city-planning policies that determine factors like minimum wage, funding for public transit and subsidized housing programs, and developmental decisions that influence where retail jobs for which Sandy is qualified are located. In addition to these institutional types of policies and practices, less formal social norms and practices also shape Sandy's path and the options that seem feasible for her, such as gendered norms regarding division of labor and child-rearing practices which, on a structural or systemic level, influence gendered patterns of single-parenthood and the kinds of jobs that are thought to be appropriate for someone like Sandy (59). Though there are many persons involved in shaping these structural processes, it would seem odd to blame any individual in particular for Sandy's situation. No one harms her directly since the harm results from all those conditions interacting *together*. While, of course, many of Sandy's own preferences and past/present decisions play a role, the structural conditions outlined above powerfully shape which employment, transportation, and housing options are available to someone in her position (45).

Recall that on Young's account of structural injustice, structural disadvantage or advantage refers respectively to the dearth or abundance of feasible opportunities that individuals have available to exercise their agency and develop their capacities. In other

[4] Young does not include this point about Sandy's risk of losing custody of her children, but I see it as an additional likely consequence of the situation that Sandy faces.

words, structural injustice refers to "the nested networks of constraints and opportunities that emerge from complex patterns of social interaction" (Aragon and Jaggar 2018, 442). Young contends that these kinds of social-structural processes (although abstract) function as objective constraints on the actions of those who are disadvantaged. And the kind and degree of constraint depends on the individual's relative social position, and the intersecting privileges that they have or lack in relation to others and the structures they are embedded in.

While people have *some* choice regarding the actions they take in relation to social structures, according to Young, structural processes do create "channels" for action, she says (52), making some courses of action relatively easy while others are hard or impossible (if they come into view as options at all). Structures can be objectively constraining in several ways. They can take the form of economic/institutional procedures, as those factors interact with implicit social practices, norms, and conventions. In addition to procedural and social constraints, structural processes also function as material constraints (Young 2011, 54), impacting conditions such as the following: locations of housing and employment; public infrastructure like streets, bridges, and public transit systems; the presence or absence of institutions with material resources; and the health of bodies of water and natural ecosystems within the land we dwell on (as Indigenous/decolonial climate activists and theorists urge us to attend to).[5]

Moreover, the social-structural processes that produce social and material constraints not only exist because of our current practices, projects, and values but are, in large part, shaped by habits, practices, and decisions of the past, as it has led up to the present. In Young's words, "the material things and constraints we encounter bear marks of past praxis" (54). And the patterns of which social groups tend to be systematically advantaged or disadvantaged, in relation to social structures, are not random or arbitrary, but exist along familiar lines of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, dis/ability, economic status, etc. In other words, historical injustices play a large role in shaping who occupies various positions on the contemporary social hierarchy. For example, "[r]acially segregated inner-city neighborhoods and inner-ring suburbs remain and are reproduced even after

[5] See Kyle Whyte's "Way Beyond the Lifeboat: An Indigenous Allegory of Climate Justice" (2017) for a discussion of the entwinement between colonialism and environmental destruction.

some of the attitudes and exclusionary policies that sanctioned their creation have atrophied to some extent" (Young 2011, 54). This is to say that historical *and* present patterns of injustice shape who has privilege or disadvantage, in relation to the kind and degree of structural constraint that they encounter.

Nonetheless, even those who occupy relatively privileged social positions are constrained in their options for action (though the nature of those constraints differs). We can turn back to Sandy's story to see why. Consider the landlord who chose to sell Sandy's building to a high-end condominium developer, even when he could reasonably foresee that doing so would displace many of his current tenants. Young asks us to imagine that this landlord owns several properties and is struggling to keep up with the maintenance costs of those buildings. The reason he chose to sell the building was so that he could allocate those funds to maintaining his other properties without raising the rent for those tenants too much. He might say "that he is doing the best thing considering the constraints under which he operates" (Young 2011, 46). In other words, he may recognize that he is contributing to the structural conditions which lead to unfair outcomes for some, but has to make some kind of compromise given his own limits and constraints within that interlocking web of structural conditions.[6] In this case, someone who owns property (especially multiple properties) occupies a relatively privileged social position but nonetheless encounters genuinely constraining economic circumstances that make it challenging to avoid contributing to injustice, even if he earnestly wishes that he could.

Although structural processes produce objective constraints for people who are relatively privileged, they also give them some freedom and generally more freedom than those who are less privileged. The landlord who sells Sandy's building is constrained by external conditions, but "[h]e would be in bad faith, of course, to believe that he literally has no alternatives" (Young 2011, 56). The same is true for the other landlord involved in Sandy's story: the one who owns the apartment she hopes to move into. One of the significant constraints that Sandy encounters is the requirement that she pay several months' rent upfront to secure this apartment. The landlord imposes this requirement

[6] Complicity is often the result of making some kind of moral compromise i.e. making a moral concession in one regard in order to pursue some "greater good". See Lepora and Goodin (2013) for further discussion of the connection between complicity and making moral compromises.

because it is standard practice in the rental market, one that exists to ensure that prospective tenants have the monetary resources needed to pay their rent and to protect against costs incurred from damages. Although the landlord's choice to require this deposit is shaped by the social-structural context within which he operates, he is not legally (or presumably otherwise) *obligated* to require it. He might have (especially if he learned of Sandy's situation) chosen to waive this requirement. Insofar as he goes along with standard practice, he not only produces a consequential constraint on Sandy's ability to secure housing, but also reinforces this social/economic practice and thus contributes to the broader patterns of housing inequality.

The two main points to take away from this discussion are the following. 1. Social-structural processes function as objective constraints on individuals' freedom and possible courses of action. This means that it is often challenging and, at times, impossible, to avoid participating in the many broad social-structural processes that interact in complex ways to give rise to structural injustice. 2. But this does not mean that we are powerless to change those structural conditions. Although structures are not reducible to a sum of individual actions, they are produced and reproduced only *through* individual actions (Young 2011, 59-60)—by people simply going through the motions of daily life, their jobs, and conventions of social interaction, and making moral compromises in virtue of the constraints that they experience.

1.2—Complicity in Structural Injustice

1.2.1—Iris Marion Young and Christopher Kutz on Complicity

Now that we have a general understanding of structural injustice, the social-structural processes that give rise to injustice, and the constraints that those processes produce, we are better situated to discuss the philosophical disagreement about whether participating and contributing to those social-structural processes and practices constitutes a form of complicity. In this section, I explain Young's argument against interpreting our responsibility for structural injustice in terms of complicity. I then describe Corwin Aragon and Alison Jaggar's reasons for believing that Young dismisses complicity too quickly. Though I am sympathetic to Young's concerns about complicity, I agree with Aragon and

Jaggar, alongside other thinkers, that there are good reasons to continue understanding some elements of our responsibility for structural injustice as complicity or shared blameworthiness. I explain Aragon and Jaggar's response to Young and provide further support for their claim that we are "structurally complicit when [we] exercise our agency in ways that reinforce the unjust social structures in which [we] participate, regardless of [our] conscious intentions" (Aragon and Jaggar 2018, 449).

The guiding question in Young's book, *Responsibility for Justice*, is "how […] agents, both individual and organizational, [ought to] think about our responsibility in relation to structural injustice" (Young 2011, 95). Answering this question is where the philosophical disagreement about complicity arises. Before discussing the matter of complicity in Young, it is important to summarize her claims about responsibility for justice.

Young first describes what she calls the "liability model" of responsibility. The liability model refers to our conventional interpretation of responsibility as backward-looking guilt or blameworthiness. This conception of responsibility is derived from legal reasoning which focuses on identifying "who dunnit"—or establishing a causal connection to the circumstance for which responsibility is sought, typically for the purpose "of sanctioning, punishing, or exacting compensation or redress" (Young 2011, 95, 97). Within such practices, if the person (or organization) whose actions caused the harm in question is found to have "acted voluntarily and with sufficient knowledge of the [likely] consequences" of those actions, it is typically appropriate to say they are guilty or blameworthy for having caused that harm (Young 2011, 97-98). Similar reasoning also underlies many of our less formal interpersonal practices of holding each other responsible in everyday moral life.

Young says that an interpretation of responsibility as liability or guilt is important for the legal system and for a sense of morality according to which individuals are expected to behave in respectful ways towards each other (98). But she argues that the liability model is "inappropriate for assigning responsibility in relation to structural injustice" (99) and she returns to Sandy's story to show why. To say of Sandy's situation that it amounts to structural injustice is to say not just that it is unfortunate, but that it is morally *wrong*. It is natural, then, to invoke the liability model and try to identify someone who wronged her

or is blameworthy for her unjust circumstances. Recall, however, that as Young constructed Sandy's story, no one behaved maliciously towards her or intended to bring about this outcome. Some even went out of their way to help her find housing. But Sandy still ends up in the unjust position of being housing deprived. Although there are many individuals whose actions *contributed* to the complex, abstract, and diffuse conditions that led to this outcome, Young argues that it is not appropriate to assign individual blame for structural injustice because "structures are produced and reproduced by large numbers of people *acting according to normally accepted rules and practices*" (100) and because no individual's actions are causally sufficient to bring about structural injustice on their own. Moreover, of all those who participate in social-structural processes, many have little awareness about how their actions contribute to those processes and to their cumulative outcomes (Young 2011, 99). They therefore cannot be liable for them. This means that, according to how the liability model interprets responsibility, they cannot be responsible for the injustice Sandy face.

By contrast, Young says that those who contribute to unjust structural processes should be held responsible but in a sense other than backward-looking blame or guilt (100). Drawing from Arendt's distinction between guilt and political responsibility (Arendt 1987), Young proposes a new model of responsibility, which she calls the "*social connection model.*" She draws our attention to a second usage of the term "responsibility." While we frequently use "responsibility" to say that someone is liable or blameworthy, we *also* use it to describe someone having a forward-looking commitment, obligation, or duty (Young 2011, 104-105; see also Card 1996). Rather than thinking of our responsibility for structural injustice as responsibility *for causing* structural injustice, Young suggests that we understand it as a responsibility *to do something* about structural injustice. This forward-looking focus is not suggest that the past does not matter, because looking to the past, Young notes, provides us with important insight into what has gone wrong and what needs to change (108). Nonetheless, Young's view suggests that rather than focusing primarily on ascribing blame for past actions, we should focus on changing what is in our power to change *now,* as we move forward towards possible futures. Thus, according to Young's social connection model, being responsible "in relation to structural injustice means that one has an obligation to join with others who share that responsibility in order to transform

the structural processes to make their outcomes less unjust" (96). This forward-looking obligation derives from our "belonging together with others in a system of interdependent processes" (105). In other words, our participation in those processes generates an obligation to attend to those structural background conditions and to organize with others in collective action to change those conditions when they lead to unjust outcomes.

Young anticipates that some might ask why we can't just modify the liability model, such that it fits in cases of structural injustice. Afterall, she says there are well-developed theories of collective responsibility and "sophisticated theories of complicity or aiding and abetting, which attribute some responsibility to persons who help or enable or support others who do blameworthy things" (100). Young, however, rejects the suggestion that theories of complicity can fit the bill in the context of structural injustice.

In order to illustrate why she finds theories of complicity to be insufficient, Young engages with Christopher Kutz' account of complicity (Kutz 2000). Following Kutz', paradigmatic cases of complicity are those in which individuals collectively coordinate their actions to bring about some shared goal. For example, the bombing of Dresden in World War II "constitutes a project in which thousands of people participate; many have different roles in the endeavor, some more important than others, and they perform different kinds of actions" (Young 2011, 101). Some of those actions have direct causal connections to the resulted bombing while, for other actions, the bombing would still have occurred without them. Kutz, however, does not ground complicity in a "but for" condition, where complicity would be established on the basis of a causal link between involved persons' actions and the consequent bombing. Rather, on Kutz' account, complicity is defined on the basis of agents' "participatory intent" to achieve that end. Those involved are complicit insofar as they "participated in the *intention* to destroy the city of Dresden" (Young 2011, 102; Kutz 2000; italics added).

Kutz does attempt to extend his theory of complicity to instances of structural injustice like climate change, where people do not *intentionally* coordinate their actions together to bring about some specific end. He says that, in such cases, people are complicit insofar as they have a "quasi-participatory" relationship to the conditions that lead to a consequent harm (Young 2011, 102; Kutz 2000). Young agrees that participation in the conditions that bring about injustice serves as a basis for persons' responsibilities for those

harms. She rejects, however, that “quasi-participatory relationships” of this kind are continuous or compatible with his account of complicity. “In the absence of an *intent* to produce the outcome”, Young says, “surely those who participate should not be found *guilty* in the same way that those who participate in a war crime are” (Young 2011, 103). Moreover, given that, on Kutz’s own theory, participatory intent is the primary condition according to which complicity is assigned and that participatory intent is lacking in cases of structural injustice, Young takes Kutz’s attempt to extend his theory of complicity to cases of structural injustice to be untenable.

Given this conceptual inconsistency in Kutz’s account, Young argues that responsibility for structural injustices like climate change, where individuals do not intentionally coordinate their actions to bring about a shared end, ought not to be thought of as a modified or attenuated form of complicity (Young 2011, 103). The difference between responsibility for purposefully coordinated collective harms and responsibility for structural injustice, Young says, is “a difference in kind, rather than degree” (104). This difference in “kind” is the conceptual distinction between responsibility interpreted as complicity (which is itself a variety of backwards-looking liability or guilt) and responsibility interpreted as political responsibility (which is a forward-looking responsibility *to do something*). This latter “kind” of responsibility is that which is captured on her “social connection model” of responsibility, where responsibility for structural injustice is understood as a forward-looking political obligation to organize alongside others in order to transform the social-structural conditions that result in injustice.

Moreover, Young resists interpreting our responsibility for structural injustice in terms of complicity or blameworthiness because people who contribute to unjust social-structural processes are “usually acting on normal and accepted rules and drawing on the resources normally available to people in those positions” (64). That is to say, the actions that contribute to structural injustice are not actions that are generally thought to be blameworthy. Moreover, even those who recognize that their actions contribute indirectly to structural injustices, such as housing crises or climate change, may resign to going along with the processes they are connected to because they feel that they are “powerless to change that process on their own” (Young 2011, 108). As discussed above, even those with relatively large amounts of social/material privilege find that the options they have

available to them, while participating in modern society, are constrained by many social-structural processes far beyond their individual control. Thus, Young suggests, if the norms and practices involved in the normal flow of a society result in injustice, then we ought to focus on changing those background conditions, rather than on ascribing blame to the lot of us, many of whom are just (presumably) doing the best we can, given the structural constraints we face.

In addition to reasons that challenge the conceptual fit of "complicity," Young argues that there are important pragmatic or practical reasons for saying that "responsibility in relation to structural injustice is a special kind of responsibility, rather than a variation on responsibility understood as guilt, blame, [liability, or complicity]" (97). Her central practical concern is that "the language of blame [or complicity] in political debates […] often impedes discussion that will end in collective action, because it […] produces defensiveness, or focuses people more on themselves than on the social relations they should be trying to change" (114). Without explaining Young's discussion of this problem in depth (for such a discussion, see Chapter 2), the idea is that accusations of individual blame for structural problems tend to produce defensiveness in response to those accusations. This, Young says, "divides people too much, creating mistrust where motivation to cooperate is required" (117). This is an important concern because, if the purpose of assigning responsibility for structural injustice is to mitigate or reduce the impacts of that injustice on persons' lived realities, then a conception of responsibility that impedes that goal would seem to be unsuited for the job.

1.2.2—Aragon and Jaggar's Response to Young: "Structural Complicity"

Recall that I am discussing whether we ought to think of our responsibility for structural injustice as a form of complicity because I need to justify my use of the term "complicity" in my claim that solidarity in resistance to structural injustice requires that we reckon with our complicity in those injustices. I agree with Young that we need to attend closely to the practices we use to attribute responsibility and blameworthiness. Her social connection model—according to which our responsibility for structural injustice is understood as "an obligation to join with others who share that responsibility in order to

transform the structural processes to make their outcomes less unjust" (Young 2011, 96)—does a good job of highlighting where much of our focus should lie. I admire the compassionate and pragmatic spirit of her social connection model. There is, I believe, much wisdom and social progress to be gained through engaging with and embodying the values of her account. Nonetheless, I contend that we can address Young's concerns about complicity without rejecting the view that we are indeed complicit (and therefore blameworthy) when we act in ways that contribute to social-structural conditions that lead to injustice. I argue, in section 1.4, that we can address Young's concern that the language of complicity impedes collective action, not by rejecting complicity, but by learning to *reckon with our complicity* in ways that support solidarity-building efforts to address structural injustice. But before proceeding to my argument about reckoning with complicity, I argue alongside Aragon and Jaggar (2018) and others, that there is good reason to continue interpreting *some* elements of our responsibility for structural injustice in terms of backward-looking complicity.

Although they too admire Young's work, Aragon and Jaggar (2018) argue that her social connection model is weakened by her explicit rejection of complicity. The social connection model does a good job of inviting us to reflect on the ways we are socially connected to injustice but, they say, Young does not develop a normative argument about why "the mere fact of connection" to an injustice generates responsibility to remedy that injustice. There seems to be a gap between our connections to injustice and the responsibilities that Young says that we have. Aragon and Jaggar say that the forward-looking focus of Young's account "seems to lose track of the reason why the burden of responsibility falls on specific people or a specific group rather than on most of humankind" (Aragon and Jaggar 2018, 446). They argue that the concept of complicity can address these weaknesses by picking out "some but not all connections [to an injustice] as ethically salient". Complicity, they say, provides the normative link between "our present responsibility with our past and present exercise of agency" (447).

They agree with Young that complicity defined on the basis of "participatory intent" cannot plausibly make sense of our responsibility in relation to structural injustice (Aragon and Jaggar 2018, 448). They suggest, however, that a different conceptualization of complicity can do the trick. To this end, they develop the more specific concept of

"structural complicity" according to which "[p]eople are structurally complicit when they exercise their agency in ways that reinforce the unjust social structures in which they participate, *regardless of their conscious intentions*" (440; italics added). This account of structural complicity, they say, strengthens Young's account by providing the normative basis for the forward-looking responsibilities she says that we have.[7]

I appreciate Aragon and Jaggar's definition of structural complicity because its focus on agency, rather than intent, does a good job of helping to tease apart when our actions are morally blameworthy and when they are not. On their definition, we may not be complicit in structural injustice when we genuinely lack feasible alternatives because our agency would, in such cases, be obstructed or at least significantly constrained beyond what the average individual could reasonably be expected to overcome. For example, someone who could afford a fuel-efficient or electric vehicle but chooses instead to purchase a gas-guzzling SUV, disregarding the environmental impacts simply because they prefer the aesthetics of that vehicle, would be considered blameworthy on Aragon and Jaggar's account of structural complicity. On the other hand, someone who does not convert the electrical system in their home to solar-electric power, because they are struggling to cover even their most basic monthly expenses, would not be considered structurally complicit on the basis of that action. In both cases, we can assume that neither individual *intends* to contribute to climate change, but there are morally relevant differences in those individuals' circumstances and the available ways that they could use their agency in their circumstances. Attending to agency draws our attention to differences in cases where individuals' actions are genuinely constrained versus those where individuals have a wide range of options available to them. Thus, Aragon and Jaggar's

[7] Aragon and Jaggar say that connections to injustice generate obligations to address it when they involve complicity. Their suggestion seems to be that the responsibility to remedy a structural injustice should fall on those who are connected to an injustice by *contributing* to it, rather than by, say, being a victim of it. Young, however, contends that those who are victims of structural injustice *do* share responsibility for remedying it, insofar as they have unique knowledge and insight (gained from lived experience) about how that injustice comes about and what its impact is (Young 2011, 113). This claim from Young might strike some as odd. Why should those who face injustice bear the burden of fixing it? I believe that the notion of complicity can help explain why victims of structural injustice also share some responsibility for it. The reason is that often those who are victims of an injustice *also* participate in reinforcing the relevant structural conditions. Complicity provides a richer justification for why some victims (at least) share responsibility for remedying injustice, compared to the view that they have this responsibility in virtue of having just *any* connection to that injustice, or simply because they have valuable insight into the nature of the problem.

definition of structural complicity is better calibrated to identify genuinely attenuating circumstances that may absolve blame, while still capturing the cases where individuals do not consciously *intend* to contribute to an injustice but are nonetheless blameworthy for doing so.

Their more refined definition of structural complicity rejects Young's claims that individuals are not liable for contributing to injustice when they are "acting within institutional rules and according to practices that most people regard as morally acceptable" (Young 2011, 95). Recall, Aragon and Jaggar say that "[p]eople are structurally complicit when they exercise their agency in ways that reinforce the unjust social structures in which they participate, regardless of their conscious intentions" (2018, 440). Under their conception of structural complicity, we can be blameworthy even when our actions conform to generally accepted norms and practices, if those norms and practices are themselves unjust. To this point, they argue that:

> '[g]oing along' with unjust processes is not morally neutral, regardless of our intention; instead it reinforces and normalizes those processes. Without complicity, injustice could not happen. To be complicit is to be morally compromised […] by being involved in wrongness and acting out the orientation to reproduce injustice. Structural complicity means that we are bound up in the wrongfulness of the injustice in which we are participating and generates responsibilities to work to remedy that injustice (Aragon & Jaggar 2018, 451)

In her own critiques of Young's model, Martha Nussbaum makes a similar point. She says, "if it is a general moral truth that citizens ought to monitor the institutions in which they live and be vigilant lest structural injustice occur within them," then it seems to follow that we are "culpably negligent" if we fail to do so (Nussbaum 2009, 142). I believe that these critiques, from Aragon and Jaggar and from Nussbaum, are sensible and important. A landlord need not *intend* that their actions lead to someone's homelessness in order to be responsible for the fact they do just that. Afterall, owning and distributing access to housing, which is a basic human need, is a large responsibility. Those who own property and obtain tenants have a responsibility to consider what consequences their financial

decisions and rental policies will have on other people. The mere fact that one's actions align with generally accepted norms and practices does not release them from responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

Consider the fact that many forms of oppression and injustice, such as racism and sexism, are deeply rooted in dominant cultural values. In his letter from Birmingham Jail, Martin Luther King Jr. wrote that he is "gravely disappointed with the white moderate" and has "almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council-er or the Klu Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to "order" than to justice" (King 1963). This remark from King shows that acting according to the status quo is a powerful force in preserving structures that give rise to injustice and oppression. These remarks from King further emphasize the point that "going along" with unjust norms and practices is most certainly not morally neutral. The moral significance of our actions, then, is not only the immediate tangible impact but the more insidious impact of how those actions deepen the roots of already deeply entrenched social and institutional norms and expectations.

These critiques of Young's argument contend that we can be found responsible, in the sense of being blameworthy, for contributing to injustice even when that result is not our intention and even when doing so aligns with generally accepted institutional processes and cultural norms. I agree with Aragon and Jaggar that Young's model would be made stronger by preserving a sense of backward-looking blame or complicity within her model of responsibility for structural injustice. Complicity, as a form of liability, provides a normative link between our past actions and our forward-looking responsibilities. Recall that Young's central theoretical reason against thinking of responsibility as complicity is that our contributions to structural injustice lack the participatory intent central to Kutz' theory of complicity. Aragon and Jaggar resolve this issue by developing the more specific concept of "structural complicity" which they define as use of one's agency in ways that contribute to injustice, even if contributing to injustice is not our intent. The focus on agency allows us to acknowledge attenuating circumstances, such as those where an individual's agency is constrained so thoroughly that they lack realistic feasible alternatives. Complicity defined this way, answers to Young's theoretical reasons against assigning complicity for structural injustice. It also, by picking out some types of

connection to injustice as *particularly* morally salient, provides a normative link between our past (and present) actions and our future-looking responsibilities to remedy injustice, addresses the weakness that Aragon and Jaggar identified in Young's account.

Aragon and Jaggar's definition of structural complicity, though helpful, still leaves some questions unanswered. First, as I've explained, the relevant structures constrain our agency and our freedom for action. So, we might ask, what degree of structural constraint on our agency is sufficient for our actions to be voluntary enough that we could be accused of complicity? Presumably, the agency that allows for complicity in structural injustice is *free* agency, which does admit of degrees. But again, what degree is necessary? Second, Aragon and Jaggar's definition of structural complicity does not make clear whether agents must have *knowledge* that their actions contribute to structural processes to be deemed complicit. We might think there is a moral difference between cases where an agent *knows* but does not *intend* that their actions contribute in this way, versus those who have no knowledge about this outcome at all. While answering these questions is beyond the scope of this project, I refer the reader to Sandra Bartky's powerful essay, "In Defense of Guilt," where she suggests that, while we should accept our moral situation of complicity or blameworthiness, we should not squabbling over or calculating "specific degrees complicity—which can become a new and insidious form of […] evasion, a back-handed way of keeping ourselves at the center" (Bartky 2002, 148).

1.3—Complicity and Solidarity

1.3.1—Relational Political Solidarity

Recall that my overarching aim is to explore the tension between complicity and solidarity in structural injustice and to ask, more specifically, whether we can genuinely be in solidarity with others while complicit in the injustice that solidarity group aims to resist. In this section, I first describe what the conditions that the relationship of political solidarity entails, then describe how complicity can indeed inhibit cultivation of these conditions. Then, in the following section, I argue that, in order to address the ways in which complicity can inhibit solidarity, we need to *reckon with our complicity* in structural injustice.

The philosophical literature on solidarity is relatively small. I do not engage directly with all accounts of solidarity, but focus on three accounts which provide insights on political solidarity that are helpful for my present aims. The first account is Sally Scholz's, which is influential in the analytic tradition of social and political philosophy (2008). Scholz argues that what unifies people in political solidarity is a shared commitment to the goal of addressing a form of injustice or oppression. Moreover, the commitment is not only a theoretical one, but a commitment to action: more specifically, to working together with others towards that shared goal. "A group that does not engage in active means to transform unjust conditions," Scholz says, "cannot rightly take on the name of political solidarity" (2008, 58). She says that, once we are conscious of the fact that our consumer behaviors are not mere individual choices but connect in morally significant ways to the "social, political, environmental, and material conditions under which [the things we purchase and consume] are produced," for example, then we begin to appreciate the fact that our consumer choices are also political acts. In relation to the injustice of labor exploitation in the garment industry, the choice "not to buy clothes from a company that uses sweatshops or underpays workers […] is a political act of resistance" (53). What I value about Scholz's account is that she highlights a central component of political solidarity: the commitment to end injustice, which is something all theories of political solidarity must include. But she also explains that for this commitment to be genuinely amount of solidarity, we must not only share that commitment in theory, but it must inform our choices and our actions.

A second theory of political solidarity that I take to be particularly insightful, is that offered by Meena Krishnamurthy, who argues "that political solidarity is and ought to be relational in a deeper sense than [Scholz] describes" (Krishnamurthy 2013, 131). According to Krishnamurthy's "relational" account, political solidarity is a relationship characterized by, not only a shared commitment to ending injustice, but also "attitudes of … mutual respect, mutual trust, and loyalty and mutual support" (131).[8] As she contends, these attitudes are important for motivating persons to work together, and "to make

[8] Krishnamurthy also includes in this list, the attitude of "collective identification", particularly collective identification as members of a shared state. I have left this condition out because I am not interested in forms of solidarity that are based on national membership. I might be more compelled to accept the condition of collective identification on the basis of membership of the solidarity group, rather than members of a state, because the impacts of our complicity often extend far beyond national borders. Nonetheless, I have left the point about collective identification aside for my present purposes.

sacrifices for the sake of others" (138). Mutual trust, for Krishnamurthy, involves the belief that we can depend on others to try their best to promote our interests as individuals (especially when we are vulnerable) and to promote the interests of the collective solidarity group. The presence of loyalty and mutual support, Krishnamurthy says, means that those involved will "have a tendency to do what is necessary to encourage, validate, take care of and provide for their fellow[s] […], even if it is of some cost to themselves" (132). Overall, Krishnamurthy's account of political solidarity is more demanding than Scholz' account, but it provides a fuller picture of what the relationship of solidarity entails, especially relationships of solidarity that enable us to cooperate together in effective ways.

In addition to Scholz and Krishnamurthy accounts of political solidarity, I also take up Iris Marion Young's brief remarks about solidarity because she provides important insight on another attitude involves in effective relationships of solidarity. She says that solidarity need not imply sameness or homogeneity. It is a relation that involves working together with others to improve the state of things for the well-being of others and/or ourselves. It involves, she says, an active stance towards an uncertain future. This active stance means that those in solidarity, do not accept "existing social structures and relations as what they are" or as unchangingly deterministic (120). Drawing from Jacques Derrida's notion of "*the perhaps*" (Derrida 1997), Young suggests that those in solidarity must take social structures and relations as possibilities—as possibilities that "*perhaps* things can be improved" (Young 2011, 120). This active and hopeful stance involved in Young's understanding of solidarity means that those in political solidarity with others discuss and act in ways that express such possibilities, rather than going along with structural processes because "that's just the way things are". This view is compelling and important to include in our discussion of the attitudes that are involved in relationships of political solidarity because we can only make a difference in the world and work together to transform unjust structural conditions if we, *first*, believe that doing so is possible. In other words, if we treat unjust structures as unchangeable, we are unlikely to engage in the collective work of trying to change them. By taking a complacent attitude and accepting structures as they are, we contribute to them remaining as they are. Thus, drawing from Young, solidarity is "an ideal, a promise, and an engagement" and requires that we remain committed to this notion of that structures can in fact we changed.

Inspired by Young's discussion of "the perhaps" and drawing from my own lived in political activist communities, I put forward an additional condition required for acting in political solidarity, novel in the literature of analytic philosophy. I contend that being in solidarity, *in lived praxis,* involves a significant amount of creativity and innovation, because it requires that we *imagine* new ways of structuring our society, in ways that differ from what exists now, and that we collaboratively devise novel ways of trying to address dynamic social problems. There is often no script to rely on when we find that our current scripts or, in other words, the conceptual schemas we use for making sense of the world have resulted in injustice. There is often a lack of readily available empirical information that could shed light on the likely outcomes of a suggested approach, if that approach has not yet been tried. We need to have the creativity to come up with and to try new approaches to remedying injustice and the courage to (inevitably) fail in some of those attempts, then to get back up, adjust accordingly, and try again.

Drawing the insights of these different theorists together with the condition that I have added, we get the following picture of political solidarity. It is a unity of people who are committed to ending injustice and who work together in active ways toward that end. They are unified not only by their political commitment but also by mutual trust, respect, loyalty and support. Moreover, they are driven by their active and hopeful stance that things can change, and they are creative in developing alternative visions of their society.[9]

1.3.3—How Complicity Can Inhibit Relations of Political Solidarity

I am now prepared to discuss how complicity can, indeed, inhibit relations of genuine political solidarity. In this section, I return to Scholz and Krishnamurthy's accounts of political solidarity and aim to demonstrate how complicity can realistically inhibit cultivation of the conditions required on their accounts. Then, I return to Young and explain how certain kinds of complicity reflect complacency and lack commitment to Derrida's notion of "the perhaps" as discussed by Young in relation to political solidarity.

[9] In Chapter 3, I expand on the discussion of political solidarity in this chapter and develop an account of what I call "whole-hearted political solidarity." I do not include my account of whole-hearted political solidarity here because a less robust understanding of political solidarity is sufficient for my purposes in this chapter.

Recall that, on Scholz' account, political solidarity is a relation involving a "conscious commitment to a cause" (Scholz 2008, 51) and that this entails, not only a theoretical commitment, but a commitment to action. To return to her example of labor exploitation in the garment industry, continuing to purchase clothes produced in unjust conditions—if we have the agency or opportunities to do otherwise—is, on Aragon and Jaggar's account, an act of complicity in the conditions of structural exploitation of garment workers (and also the environmental injustice of mass garment waste from cheaply produced clothing). Taken this way, complicitous acts of this sort can reasonably be interpreted as displaying an absence of the active commitment involved in political solidarity on Scholz' account.

Let's turn, now, to Krishnamurthy more demanding account, in order to see how unreflective complicity can impede development of the conditions necessary for a more deeply relational sense of political solidarity. Recall that, for Krishnamurthy, political solidarity against an injustice, requires "mutual respect, mutual trust and loyalty and mutual support" (Krishnamurthy 2013, 131), because those attitudes are important for motivating individuals to make the sorts of sacrifices involved in pursuing justice. I argue that complicity can inhibit the fulfillment of these conditions, primarily because, if a person acts uncritically in ways that reinforce unjust structural processes, then others will have reason to distrust that person and their commitment to the aims of the collective. In other words, unexamined complicity can disrupt or inhibit the social trust that is needed for political solidarity and give reason for others to doubt that person's respect and mutual support for the solidarity group seeking justice. For example, imagine a heterosexual individual—let's call her Ashley who attends a protest for LGBTQ+ rights. One of the speakers at the protest discusses, at length, how the Chick-fil-A franchise donate to anti-LGBTQ+ organizations (Kirkland 2021) and the speaker thus calls for a collective boycott of Chick-fil A, in solidarity with the queer community. Ashley cheers and shouts her support, holding up her sign that says "solidarity for queer rights!" After a few more speeches, chants, and a vibrant drum circle, the protest wraps up for the day. Ashley gets in her car to drive home. She is, however, quite hungry. She knows that she needs to stop somewhere nearby, because it is getting late and her own neighborhood is a food desert (i.e. a neighborhood lacking in options for food). On her route home, she passes a Chick-

fil-A. There is another fast-food restaurant in the same parking lot, but it is a restaurant that she doesn't like and, moreover, it has a very long line for the drive-thru. She hums and haws for a moment, thinking that she should put her taste preferences aside in order to avoid Chick-fil-A. She then remembers, however, that she has a Chick-fil-A coupon in her glove compartment and money is tight right now because funding was just cut to the non-profit organization that she works for and, subsequently, so were her hours. So, although she feels guilty about it, she pulls her car into Chick-fil-A drive-thru. While Ashley waits, one of the people that she met at the protest and sang alongside sees Ashley waiting for her food in the Chick-fil-A drive-thru. While many people are understanding of the fact that we often have to make compromises, it would not be unreasonable for this person to question Ashley's commitment to the cause and begin distrusting her loyalty and support to those involved in this political struggle.

Next, recall Young's claim that being and acting in solidarity with others involves seeing structures and social-structural processes as possibilities or, in other words, remaining committed to the notion that "*perhaps* things can be improved" (Young 2011, 120). If one is complicit in a structural injustice, in virtue of behaving as if unjust structural processes are unchangeable, they demonstrate a lack of commitment to the possibility that structural processes can be changed and transformed in order to make them more just—and are thus complicit in reinforcing those processes. Consider the fact that Sandy "experiences the confluence of social rules as objective constraints because others behave as though they are" (Young 2011, 55). Could anyone look Sandy in the eye and earnestly tell her that they are in solidarity with her against the injustice of housing deprivation, while also saying "your situation is unfair but, unfortunately, that is just the way things are and it does not seem possible to change this system"? Could those of us with racial privilege look those who experience racial injustice in the eye and say again, "racism is unfortunate, but there is not much we can do to reduce it"? Could those in economically privileged social positions look graduate students/teaching assistants/untenured instructors, for example, in the eye and say "we are in solidarity with you against the institutional exploitation of your educational labor. But while it is unfortunate you are not paid a living wage, this is just the way that things have to be"?

This type of complacency (not to be confused with complicity) fails to fulfill Young's requirement for solidarity that we remain committed to "the perhaps". This notion—that *perhaps* things can be made better—is important because, when we treat unjust structures as unchangeable, we are not trying to change them. Seeing structures as possible subjects for change and transformation is necessary for cultivating the type of creativity and courage that I contend is needed for transforming deeply entrenched conditions of structural injustice. Returning, just briefly, to Sandy: recall that the large rental deposit fee was a powerful contributing factor, leading to her imminent vulnerability to homelessness. While some might say that the landlord is justified in maintaining this requirement, given that it is standard practice—I contend that, if he were to do so while having alternatives and after learning that this requirement is the final straw that leads to Sandy's housing deprivation, he could not genuinely be said to be in *solidarity* with her against that injustice. According to my claim that solidarity requires creativity and innovative persistence, his being in solidarity with her would most certainly entail taking the time, at least, to think creatively about whether there are alternative solutions that could work for them both.

Before moving forward, I would like to address one more point from Young. Recall that Young suggests that the language of blame (including complicity) is likely to create defensiveness, creating mistrust when, what we need, is to cooperate, collaborate, and work together. As I mentioned before. I take this practical concern very seriously. Afterall, what use is our conceptualization of responsibility for structural injustice if it does not lead to the kind of collective action needed to bring about social-structural transformation? While there is much to be said about this practical concern (and I say more in Chapter 2), I suggest here, briefly, that it is not just "the language [of complicity]" that produces defensiveness and mistrust—but the act of complicity itself. As discussed above, acts of complicity in structural injustice can involve a lack of commitment to the collective goal of the solidarity group seeking justice—reasonably leading others to mistrust and doubt those agents' mutual trust, respect, loyalty, and support for that cause. Here, the mistrust is coming specifically from those who are trying to work in solidarity against injustice towards those who are complicit in that injustice.

As I have argued, there are several ways in which acts of complicity can inhibit the relational and agential conditions required for cultivating a robust sense of political solidarity with others. What does this mean, then, for our lived practice of building solidarity? As discussed, our actions are often constrained by the very structures we aim to resist, in some cases making it challenging or infeasible to avoid all complicity in structural injustice. Thus, as I will discuss further in section 1.4.2, any politically productive account of solidarity cannot require moral purity or an absence of complicity, for otherwise building solidarity would be a practical impossibility. If we are to have solidarity at all, it will have to be imperfect solidarity, and comprised of fallible humans who are constrained, in various degrees, by the structural conditions they are embedded in. Just as complicity often involves compromise (Lepora and Goodin 2013), so too, I contend, does our solidarity. Nonetheless, in order to nurture our relations of solidarity and to protect them from being eroded by mistrust, I argue that political solidarity requires that we *reckon with our complicity* in the injustices we aim to address.

1.4—For Solidarity's Sake: Reckoning with Complicity

1.4.1—Reckoning with Complicity

In this final section, I explain the view that being in political solidarity with others involves *reckoning with our complicity* in that injustice. To be clear, my view is not that the reckoning must happen prior to the solidarity work. Reckoning with complicity is something we learn how to do by engaging in political discussion with others. But not reckoning with complicity at all would impede our efforts to genuinely be in solidarity with others. I give an account of what the practice of reckoning with complicity entails, which should enable us to see more clearly how we can work towards embodying the virtues of solidarity in the messiness of our deeply interconnected world.

Clare Land, in *Decolonizing Solidarity: Dilemmas and Directions for Supporters of Indigenous Struggles,* is the only author I could locate who explicitly endorses the view that reckoning with complicity is important for political solidarity (Land 2015). In her words, a "key element of the politics of solidarity is the necessity of reckoning with complicity" (Land 2015, 229). Land focuses on non-Indigenous settlers' complicity in the

ongoing processes of colonization that have led to Indigenous' people's displacement, marginalization, and the genocide of Indigenous cultures (230). Her discussion helps us to see how settlers can and ought to reckon with our complicity in the colonization of Indigenous peoples. She says that,

> Reckoning with complicity is multifaceted, involving admitting one's embroilment in a society that provides unearned dividends to certain groups of people, and admitting that one operates from within the structures that one critiques. It involves confronting the fact that colonialism creates local problems, not just faraway problems. This more directly implicates the self, begging more urgent questions about what actual personal sacrifice might be needed to address such problems and injustice (Land 2015, 246-247).

I build here on Land's argument about reckoning with complicity in colonization by attempting to move us towards an account of reckoning with complicity in structural injustices, more generally.

Drawing from dictionary definitions of 'reckoning'[10]—reckoning, in general, tends to describe some calculation or measuring of an account and a settling of that account. In the case of reckoning with complicity, this means taking stock of one's past actions and determining some kind of "settlement" for those actions: more specifically, making amends for them and remedying their impacts as much as possible. This requires that we recognize how we are complicit in structural injustice through our actions and also recognize use of unearned privileges and the structural benefits those privileges incur. The "settlement" involved in reckoning entails better aligning ourselves (our attitudes, our actions) with the goal of fighting injustice and with making productive use of social privilege to enact social change. Doing so requires that we deal maturely with the guilt and moral discomfort that comes with accepting our complicity. Let me expand on each of these points in turn.

It's obvious that we need to recognize our complicity in order to reckon with it. We don't need an exact calculation of it, to be sure, but we need some sense of the seriousness of it. We need to appreciate what it is and what impact it has on others. I wouldn't say that

[10] Collins Dictionary. "Reckoning." Accessed 20 June 2024.

I appreciated my complicity in the fast-fashion industry and the injustices it perpetuates, for example, if I didn't understand the harms of that industry. Recognizing our complicity also involves accepting some responsibility in a backward-looking sense for the relevant behaviour (not for the unjust social structures in their entirety, of course). Otherwise, we would not truly be acknowledging that we are complicit.

For those of us who are privileged, recognizing our complicity also involves awakening ourselves to our privilege (i.e., unearned advantages). Without gaining such self-knowledge, we are likely to use our privilege in ways that reinforce unequal power relations, making us complicit in those power imbalances. We could even be complicit in inequality within a group while trying to work within it to rectify injustice. For example, we might engage in "white savior" type behaviour in a group that is devoted to racial justice.

In terms of "settling accounts" in the wake of our complicity, it is not, in most cases, realistic to ask that we never be complicit in injustice, but we can take steps to limit our complicity. We can determine what we can tangibly do to have our actions better reflect a commitment to mitigate injustice. This will involve focusing on the injustices we are most implicated in and determining what sacrifices we can and should make[11]. For example, for those of us in developed nations whose consumption leads in large part to the exploitation of garment workers in developing nations, if we aim to be in solidarity against labor exploitation and environmental destruction brought about by mass production, we can aim to find alternatives to fast fashion. This might mean thrifting clothes more often, finding more ethically produced alternatives (although this is, of course, price-prohibitive for many of us), and also challenging norms of professionalism that express to us that we must wear up-to-date clothes that reflect frequently changing trends and not repeat outfits too often. This is not to say that we should aim for perfection in this goal, but we should make tangible changes where we are able to.

Turning again to those of us who are privileged, we should also aim to use our privilege in the service of our commitment to fight injustice (Land 2015). While we can't

[11] See Young's chapter, "Responsibility Across Borders", in *Responsibility for Justice* for a discussion of the "parameters of reasoning" that we can use in order to determine how we can most effectively fulfill our forward-looking responsibility for enacting change (i.e. power, privilege, interest, and collective ability).

simply renounce our privilege, we can, as allies, use the privilege we have, such as our epistemic credibility in certain spaces (Fricker 2007), in ways that aim towards justice. For example, those who occupy positions of power with academia, if they aim to be in solidarity with groups resisting labor exploitation in our academic institutions, can use the privilege and power conferred by their positions and/or their identities in order to advocate for change with the institutions where they hold power. This will involve engaging in discussions with those they aim to be in solidarity with, in order to gain a better understanding of their needs and the barriers they encounter to having those needs met. Persons with privilege and power in academia can then advocate for changes that address those barriers in administrative meetings.

Lastly, we can neither settle accounts for our complicity nor reckon with it unless we respond in morally healthy ways to the discomfort of knowing that we are complicit. We can't let that knowledge immobilize us. We also can't respond so strongly to being complicit that our attention stays on our guilt or ourselves, rather than the injustice that needs mitigating (DiAngelo 2011). Becoming inconsolable upon confronting one's complicity can diminish others' trust that we are equipped and ready to engage in that political work. We also, of course, cannot quickly ignore our complicity after recognizing it because it makes us uncomfortable. Rather we need to live with it and work through our moral discomfort while making change.

Knowing what reckoning with our complicity involves, we can now see why it is important for political solidarity. Reckoning with complicity is an ongoing process and, again, is not a prerequisite that we must complete in full before joining in solidarity. It is, rather, something that we do and learn to do through ongoing engagement with others in political action and discussions. However, reckoning with complicity in an ongoing way is important for solidarity because of the following reasons. It demonstrates to others with whom we are in solidarity that we understand and accept how we contribute to injustice, accept blame where appropriate, are cognizant of unearned privilege and social power, are making earnest attempts to most productively contribute to our shared political cause, and are willing to make some sacrifices for that end. This shows others that we have an active commitment to our shared political goal and that we respect and support those we aim to be in solidarity with, and we trust their judgement about what needs to be changed. It

affirms to others, especially those who occupy more disadvantaged social positions, that we respect and care for them, are willing to make sacrifices in order to pursue justice on behalf of others, and are worthy of being trusted and respected ourselves. In short, reckoning with complicity promotes the conditions for solidarity founds in Scholz and Krishamurthy's theories. It does the same for the condition offered by Young and the condition that I have added. Reckoning with our complicity demonstrates a commitment to the possibility that structures can be changed and that we are willing to take part in the creative deliberation needed to imagine alternative, more just, ways of structuring our world—more just ways of, for example, organizing our institutions, economic systems, social practices, and relationships with each other.

1.4.2—Additional Considerations

As discussed, Young notes that although structural processes constrain our actions, they do not eliminate freedom. It is sometimes in bad faith to say that we have no alternatives. Shouldn't we then just try our best to avoid complicity altogether, rather than reckon with the complicity we have?

In response to this possible objection, I will expand on a claim I have made throughout that it is often not possible to avoid complicity in our deeply interconnected and globalized moral landscape. Let me do that by invoking and reflecting on Alexis Shotwell's argument that pursuits toward moral purity are futile efforts to "control a complex situation that is fundamentally outside our control" (Shotwell 2016, 8). Shotwell contends that it is not realistically possible to avoid complicity. Rejecting imperatives to pursue moral "purity" is not to welcome wrongdoing. Rather, accepting that complicity is a constitutive feature of our world is a "*no nonsense commitment*" to working on, with, and for our fraught and morally compromised world (Shotwell 2016, 5; Haraway 1991). It means we should stop turning away from the messy reality of our situation and our entwinement with others.

One problem with the reasoning underlying an idealized vision of purity (or "purism") is that it fails to recognize our deep interdependence, not only with each other, but also with the fraught past which has led us to the compromised present we now inhabit. The moral troubles of this world are caused, enabled, and maintained by imperceivably

large and complex webs of interdependence between ourselves and others. We are thus implicated and complicit in harms we oppose. So, Shotwell asks, "[w]hat happens if we start from there?" (Shotwell 2016., 5). In similar spirit to my argument (though approached from the specific angle of critiquing the ideology that she calls "purism" or "purity politics"), Shotwell puts forth the claim that that "in order to resist, shift, and reconfigure the available classificatory frameworks […] "we need to revisit how we remember and reckon with [the] past" (35-36).

Building on this imperative from Shotwell, it's important to note that even if avoiding complicity altogether were *theoretically* possible, in some *theoretically ideal circumstances*, pursuits towards individualized purity (in the messy reality of our non-ideal world) do little to support our collective efforts to bring about justice in our *actual* world. We could do our very best to maintain morally "clean hands" but, even if doing so were possible, it would leave the collective-produced structural conditions at the root of the injustice largely untouched. It might absolve some feelings of individual guilt or even feed into our egos about our own moral righteousness, but may do very little to reduce the suffering of our global fellows. All the while, the futility of individual purity leaves us feeling distraught or hopeless in our attempts to improve things. Thus, Shotwell says, "purism is a de-collectivizing, de-mobilizing, paradoxical politics of despair" (9). Separating ourselves off from others and from social-structural processes, on a dead-end road to impossible purity, is a renunciation of our interdependence with others and with the world itself. Aiming for moral purity, by attempting to disconnect from the webs of social interdependence that we are in with others, thus constitutes a sacrifice of the possibility of solidarity.

This is why I have argued that, although complicity can indeed threaten the conditions of political solidarity, I have not suggested that we deal with our complicity by ending it altogether. If solidarity required moral perfection in regard to the injustice we aim to resist, solidarity would, itself, be a practical impossibility. This would be an unacceptable conclusion. We *need* solidarity in order to work together to transform unjust structural processes. So we need an understanding of solidarity that makes room for the ways we fall short, and we need an understanding of how we grapple with the challenges posed by complicity.

The beauty in this mess is that, although our interdependence with others leads to many vulnerabilities—both vulnerabilities to experiencing injustice but also vulnerability to be implicated in harms we oppose—our interdependence is also the only way through. Solidarity allows us to connect with and lean on others, to build collective movements to change conditions that are harmful to our world and those within it. We can make a difference in the world, and we need not be perfect in order to do so.

1.5—Conclusion

My goal here has been to discuss important connections between structural injustice, complicity, and solidarity; more specifically, the uncover the challenges that complicity poses for our solidarity building efforts. Without attempting to offer a blanket answer regarding what, exactly, we must do to join in relations of solidarity with specific groups and collectives or to provide a thorough account of what "reckoning with complicity" might look when applied to specific cases, I have argued, in response to the question of whether we can join in political solidarity with others while being complicit in the structural causes of the injustice we aim to resist, that the answer is a resounding "yes." Given that it is impossible to avoid some degrees of complicity and that even when it is not *impossible*, we are fallible and limited human beings, and given that solidarity is a vital relation towards achieving justice, we *must* be able to join in solidarity while being complicit, for otherwise our efforts toward justice will be stopped dead in their tracks.

Further to this point, Sandra Bartky rejects what she describes as the "common New Age belief" that "personal change must precede political action" (Bartky 2002, 148). This sentiment echoes a notion I have heard in colloquial discussions of romantic relationships and self-improvement. We often hear that "you have to love yourself before you can be loved by someone else". This notion, I believe, can be just as damning to our cultivation of self-love and self-compassion, as the parallel assumption that we must first correct or eliminate complicity before joining in solidarity. The fact is, we are interdependent beings—our minds and our spirits do not make sense of ourselves or the world as isolated agents. While it is true that, sometimes, an important part of cultivating self-love involves focusing inward before looking outwards for affirmation from others, it is *also* true that we are lovable even when we are not yet ready to love ourselves. We can learn to recognize

our worthiness of self-love through having our worth affirmed to us through our interactions and relations with others. In much the same way that the most fruitful personal healing cannot be done in isolation, political transformation and our journeys towards acting in alignment with our own values, also, is not most fruitfully achieved in isolation. In Bartky's words, "[m]eaningful political action will change us; the relationship between personal change and political empowerment is complex; each needs the other. Neither can be fully successful in the absence of the other" (148).

This complexity—the in-between, the fuzzy morally grey areas—are where transformations take place. It is not the case that we must rid ourselves of all complicity and attain impossibly clean hands before joining in solidarity. Nonetheless, being in relational political solidarity with others places significant moral demands on us. One of the practices needed for meeting these demands, I argue, is that we reckon with our complicity. Perfection is not possible—our world is structurally unjust and morally fraught, "the point, however, is to change it" (Marx 1975, 423; cited in Shotwell 2016, 195).

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Chapter 2
Transformative Justice and Young's Social Connection Model: Disentangling Punishment from Responsibility

2.0: Introduction

Iris Marion Young says that "structural injustice" is a unique type of moral wrong. On her account, structural injustice differs from individual wrongs because it "occurs as a consequence of many individuals and institutions acting to pursue their particular goals and interests, for the most part within the limits of accepted rules and norms" (Young 2011, 52). In seeking to understand our *responsibility* for structural injustice, Young distinguishes between forward-looking and backward-looking responsibility (Young 2011; Arendt 1987). Young says that we conventionally interpret responsibility according to what she calls the "liability model". Under this interpretation, responsibility is understood as backward-looking guilt or blameworthiness. The liability model, she argues, is appropriate for legal contexts and individual wrongs but is unsuitable for interpreting our responsibility for injustices that are *structural*. She provides several theoretical reasons in support of this view and develops her forward-looking "social connection model" as an alternative to the "liability model". In addition to her theoretical reasons, she also offers an important *practical* reason against using the liability model to interpret our responsibility for structural injustice. Namely, she argues that a focus on guilt and blame tends to produce defensiveness, thus pushing individuals away from joining in collective movements towards justice. This paper aims to engage directly with this practical concern.

According to the social connection model, our responsibility for structural injustice should be understood as forward-looking responsibility to transform the social-structural processes that result in injustice. Despite its influence and popularity, the social connection model has also been subject to critique. Some worry that the social connection model "gives up" too much in terms of backward-looking responsibility and blame (Nussbaum 2009; Aragon & Jaggar 2018). Most of these critiques focus on Young's theoretical reasons against the liability model. While these authors provide strong arguments about the importance of backward-looking responsibility for structural injustice, Young's practical

concern about defensiveness as a barrier to collective action remains largely unaddressed within the literature on responsibility for structural injustice. I believe that the lack of sufficient attention to Young's practical concern misses an opportunity to better understand the solidarity-building efforts needed to actually implement Young's theory of responsibility for justice. This chapter aims to fill this gap by responding directly to Young's concern about defensiveness as a barrier to collective action. Rather than taking this concern as an additional reason to reject the liability model altogether, I argue that we ought to build on Martha Nussbaum's brief discussion of reconceptualizing how we understand backward-looking responsibility and respond to guilt for contributing to structural injustices (Nussbaum 2009, 144). I suggest that dispositions towards defensiveness in response to claims of guilt or blame are rooted in, or at least worsened by, the fact that we have institutionally and culturally conflated liability with punishment.

Luckily, the literature on transformative justice and Black feminist literature on prison abolition have already shown that accountability (a form of responsibility involving both backward and forward-looking elements) need not be interpreted in a punitive sense (Sered 2019; Kaba 2021; Davis 2003). This insight from transformative justice shows that we can disentangle punishment from backward-looking responsibility which, I argue, can help reduce dispositions of defensiveness in conversations about our contributions to structural injustice. Thus, I argue that the distinction between accountability and punishment can help us to preserve an important sense of backward-looking responsibility for injustice while still addressing Young's important practical concern and staying true to the compassionate and action-focused spirit of her social connection model.

In making this argument, I draw parallels between Young's social connection model and transformative justice, and between the liability model and punitive justice, bringing Young's political philosophy in direct conversation with activist-oriented literature on transformative justice. I see this project not only as an opportunity to draw insight from the transformative justice movement and address philosophical concerns with Young's social connection model, but also as an opportunity to discuss restorative and transformative justice as a valuable and promising alternatives to punitive justice.

The ideas that Young expresses in her social connection model are remarkably compatible with the values found in the transformative justice movement. However, I have

not been able to find any works which put these two bodies of literature into direct conversation with each other[12]. Making this connection explicit, appealing to the knowledge generated through praxis-based activism and political thought, will productively enrich philosophical analyses of structural injustice. Afterall, the theoretical methods of philosophy are extremely valuable, indispensable to our critical thinking and development of political theory, but there is wisdom that arises from having one's feet firmly planted on the ground—by engaging in dialogue not only on an abstract level, but through praxis with flesh and blood people as we navigate injustice and harm in our troubled world.

My argument will proceed as follows. In section 2.1, I introduce the concept of structural injustice, Young's social connection model, her theoretical argument against using the liability model to interpret our responsibility for structural injustice, and her practical concern about defensiveness as a barrier to collective action. In section 2.2, I provide an overview of restorative justice, transformative justice, and related arguments from the prison abolition literature—motivating the inclusion of these movements in this discussion. I then describe the central insight which I believe can help us to address Young's practical concern: namely, that accountability (which, again, includes both backward and forward-looking responsibility) need not be interpreted in a punitive sense. Then, in section 2.3, I discuss how disentangling punishment from backward-looking responsibility allows us to maintain that we can be blameworthy for contributing to structural injustice, while still addressing Young's important practical concern about defensiveness as a barrier to collective action and political solidarity. In section 2.4, I close with a brief summary and concluding remarks.

2.1: Structural Injustice and Young's Social Connection Model

2.1.1: The Collective Causes of Structural Injustice

Young's articulation of "structural injustice" and her related "social connection model" of responsibility have been widely influential in philosophy and political theory.

[12] There are a few articles which argue for the importance of developing a "transformative" approach to climate justice (see Krause 2018 and Newell et al. 2021), but these articles do not engage with activist literatures on "transformative justice" or discuss how a "transformative" approach to climate change relates to our practices of ascribing blame.

Her primary examples of structural injustice are labor exploitation in sweatshops (Young 2006) and vulnerability to homelessness (Young 2011). Young's articulation of the concept of structural injustice has helped us to better understand the collective nature of many injustices, and the challenges of addressing injustice when there is not one person or group who is causally responsible for the injustice and its harms. Since the posthumous publication of Young's book, *Responsibility for Justice*, additional moral problems that have been described as forms of structural injustice include gender inequity (Parekh 2011), climate change (Eckersely 2016; Larrére 2018), healthcare disparities (Gould 2018), epistemic injustice in educational systems (Nikolaidis 2023) and algorithmic injustice (Lin & Chen 2022; Kasirzedeh 2022). Applying Young's accompanying "social connection model" of responsibility to these contexts helps us to make sense not only of the *causes* of these injustices but the ways we can address and reduce their consequent harms.

According to Young's account, structural injustice "exists when social processes put large groups of persons under systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time that these processes enable others to dominate or to have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising capacities available to them" (Young 2011, 52). This kind of injustice, most often, does not occur as a result of malicious intention from bad actors but rather "as a consequence of many individuals and institutions acting to pursue their particular goals and interests, for the most part within the limits of accepted rules and norms" (52). Thus, in most cases of structural injustice, there is not one or a few clear persons, decisions, or policies that are directly causally responsible for the injustice. Rather, structural injustice is the cumulative result of many individual and institutional actions interacting together in complex and often unpredictable ways. For most of us, this result is deeply regrettable but nonetheless very challenging to avoid.

The social-structural processes that give rise to injustice include large and influential institutions, organizations, and industries (such as federal, state, and local government policies and laws, global economic systems, industrial operations, and institutional rules and practices). But, as Young points out, such structures are produced and reproduced only through individual action (2011, 60). Young's analysis highlights the importance of attending to the role that such industries, institutions, and corporations play

in contributing to injustice, but it also emphasizes the recursive interaction between structures and individual actions. Thus, when analyzing the contributing causes of structural injustice, we cannot simply blame these abstract structural entities and be done with it. Doing so overlooks the fact that industries and institutions are comprised of individual persons fulfilling various roles. Even large industries function primarily through small daily actions of workers and managers at various levels in the chains of command, who may or may not have much power. They function, in other words, largely through the processes of regular people just "doing their jobs" according to the policies and duties laid out for them. Failing to recognize that such structures are produced through individual actions also overlooks broader responsibility of those who are not part of some institution or industry themselves but contribute to those structures through, for example, consumer habits and the reinforcement of social norms regarding what products and services we expect to be available and at what price. The point is, many contributing causes of structural injustice are small mundane actions and choices, made by normal people under the constraints of daily life, often with limited realistic alternatives.

We might think, for example, of the small ways that each of us contributes to the causes of climate change and environmental destruction. Many of us are likely quite concerned about climate change, and the impact it has and will have on the living beings that inhabit this planet. Nonetheless, all of us, simply by living in the society that we do, participate in the processes that contribute to and exacerbate climate change. This means that we contribute to climate injustice in seemingly small but *frequent* ways. We purchase foods and household goods that are wrapped in single-use plastic. We go to coffee shops. Perhaps we sometimes bring a reusable coffee mug, but likely not always, especially when bustling about during a busy workday, when we need a quick caffeine boost to keep up with the relentlessly fast pace of North American work-culture. Many of us drive personal vehicles, take international flights to conferences or other destinations. We buy clothing that was produced using toxic chemicals and then transported across the globe for our use. Some (perhaps much) of the food we eat is grown in distant locations and shipped to our local grocery stores. There are, of course, ways to avoid doing some of these things, but most alternatives require the luxury of excess time and disposable income to purchase more ethically produced products.

Moreover, as Young's discussion makes clear, none of our individual actions, on their own, are causally responsible for bringing about structural injustice. This means that one person abstaining from such actions is not sufficient to meaningfully impact the consequent structural injustice when most others carry on with "business as usual". It is precisely because of the underlying structures of our society that these options (consuming items packaged in single-use plastic, driving petroleum-fueled vehicles, purchasing products and foods produced far away, taking flights) are the most feasible and accessible options available for participating in the normal "goings-on" of our modern lives and jobs, especially at the breakneck speeds that our current economic system demands.

Let's consider an example more closely in order to highlight the many disconnected conditions that make it challenging to avoid contributing to climate change. My partner sometimes drives me to and from campus where I work, in our 2009 Dodge Caravan which is not very fuel-efficient. I try to ride my bike to campus most days, but this becomes less feasible when Canadian winter sets in, at which point I use public city busses as my primary form of transportation. However, the bus routes from my neighborhood to campus are limited and the listed bus times are often unreliable, leading to challenges in planning my day efficiently.

Additionally, getting to the closest bus stop from my neighborhood requires a long walk, since the stop has been moved for a prolonged construction project. I can manage this walk but doing so would not be feasible for many with even moderate challenges in mobility (such as those who are elderly and/or have physical disabilities which impact mobility). The inaccessible placement of bus stops demands an even longer commitment of time for commuting, posing a challenge especially to those, myself included, who are precariously employed with multiple part time positions to balance. The walks to and from the bus stop also involve walking through construction sites, parking lots, and alleyways, which can feel risky to navigate at night or early morning as a small-in-stature and visibly queer woman. Luckily, I consider myself to be pretty tough and have the "know-how" to navigate these parts of town. But all of these obstacles combined—the physical demand and time commitment of long walks to and from bus stops, the unreliable bus schedules, the inefficient travel times due to construction—are enough of a "time tax" that I sometimes

ask my partner to drop me off at campus (involving a drive across town and back) or I will drive myself, forking over money for expensive on-campus parking.

I am fortunate to have the option available to me when I need it but driving our vehicle across town and back does emit environment-damaging fossil fuel emissions. It also reinforces the cultural norms according to which most individuals are expected to have a personal vehicle to move around. This norm, in turn, contributes to a lack of resources and funding directed towards reliable and efficient public transit options. And to be frank with my readers, if campus parking passes were not so expensive then, I can honestly admit, I would drive rather than bike or bus to campus much more often than I do.

Driving twenty minutes across town for work is a small and relatively trivial example. It might even seem silly to discuss, given the utter normalcy of doing so, alongside the marginal amount of emissions produced by a short drive compared to those produced by industrial factories. But this trivial driving example is certainly not the only way many of us will contribute to climate injustice on any given day, often without batting an eye. It also demonstrates that even when one consciously desires to avoid contributing in small but cumulative ways to injustices like climate change (by driving a vehicle that produces climate damaging emissions), there are often good or decent reasons for making a moral compromise—such as limitations in time, concerns about personal safety, or financial inaccessibility of less damaging alternatives.

I drive across town to write and teach about structural injustice, sometimes stop for a coffee on the way, wear clothes that have been manufactured across the globe (because they are what is within my budget) in order to look professional when I write and present on these topics, sometimes purchase lunch or snacks that come in single-use packaging, and even travel by air to conferences about topics like structural injustice. I hope that the irony (or challenging to avoid hypocrisy) of all this is not lost on us. It highlights the deep embeddedness of the problem. The issue is far bigger and deeper than my drive to and from campus. Our world is built such that choosing the options in daily functioning which contribute to structural injustice are the paths of least resistance.

The consequences of contributing to structural processes are elusive and often challenging to truly appreciate. Even when we deposit plastic cups into the recycling bin, only a small percentage of these products actually end up being recycled. They are often

shipped away to nations in the global south (Plastic Pollution Coalition 2022). Once out of our sight, they are then either burned, releasing toxic chemicals into their air, or left to rot in landfills where they break into smaller pieces but do not decompose (Plastic Pollution Coalition 2022). Given that waste management sites are often located near low-income and racialized neighborhoods, they contribute not only to environmental destruction generally, but to environmental racism (Erickson 2016; Waldron 2021; Winters 2023).

I hope that the seemingly mundane examples above have been sufficient to illustrate the ways in which structural injustices, such as climate change and environmental racism, are the consequence of many diffuse actions and choices. They also demonstrate the challenges of assigning responsibility for structural injustice. Although using a single-use coffee cup, for example, does contribute to the over-production of consumer materials and a waste problem leading to pollution of our limited environmental space, using a disposable coffee cup does not seem causally responsible for climate injustice in a very direct sense.

2.1.2: Social Connection Model of Responsibility

How we ought to think of our responsibility for structural injustice is the guiding question in Young's seminal text, *Responsibility for Justice* (2011). Young says that we most conventionally interpret responsibility according to what she calls the "liability model". Under this interpretation, responsibility is understood as backward-looking liability, guilt, or blameworthiness. This interpretation of responsibility, Young argues, is important in many contexts but it is not a good fit for understanding our responsibility for structural injustices like those described in the section above. She develops her forward-looking "social connection model" as an alternative, offering us another way to think about our responsibility in relation structural injustice. In this section, I briefly describe Young's arguments against using the liability model to interpret responsibility for structural injustice and explain how responsibility is understood on her alternative social connection model.

The liability model interprets responsibility as guilt or blameworthiness. It is backwards looking in the sense that it focuses on establishing responsibility for a harm or a wrong that has already occurred. Practices of assigning responsibility under this model involve identifying who is causally connected to the circumstances for which responsibility is sought, typically for the purpose of "sanctioning, punishing, or exacting compensation

or redress" (Young 2011, 97-98). One's responsibility may be mitigated or dismissed in certain cases, such as when an agent can show that their actions were not voluntary. Accordingly, to say that one is responsible for X on the liability model is to say that one is *guilty of* or *blameworthy for* X.

Young argues that an interpretation of responsibility as liability, guilt, or blame, while "indispensable for a legal system and for a sense of moral right that respects agents as individuals and expects them to behave in respectful ways towards others," is not appropriate for assigning responsibility in relation to structural injustice (Young 2011, 98-99). She provides several conceptual reasons to support this claim. I will not outline all of her conceptual reasons here since I am focused on her practical concerns (for a discussion of her conceptual argument, see Chapter 1) but one reason she offers is that "it is in the nature of … structural processes that their potentially harmful outcomes cannot be traced directly to any particular contributors in the process" (100). So, the liability model's approach of assigning responsibility by establishing a causal connection is not helpful, insofar as no individual agent's actions are sufficient to bring about structural injustice on their own.

She says that responsibility for structural injustice ought to be thought of as "a special kind of responsibility, rather than a variation on responsibility understood as guilt, blame, fault, or liability" (Young 2011, 97). The first practical concern relates closely to her theoretical argument and is woven into those discussions. She says that conceptualizing responsibility as liability leads us to focus on identifying one or a few individual wrongdoers, which allows the many other individuals who are connected to an injustice to excuse themselves from their own responsibility. What is more, it distracts us from noticing and addressing the unjust "background conditions" that result in injustice (107). Young's most central practical concern, however, is that the language of blame in political discourse creates defensiveness, which impedes the kind of collective action needed to adequately address structural injustice. Thus, Young argues, it is not just that the liability model is conceptually unsuited for making sense of our responsibility for structural injustice, but it is also a politically unproductive approach.

Young develops her "social connection model" as an alternative to the liability model. Drawing on Hannah Arendt's distinction between guilt and political responsibility

(Arendt 1987; 1994), the social connection model says that we are responsible for structural injustice not in terms of backward-looking guilt, but as a forward-looking responsibility or political obligation (Young 2011, 96). Our responsibility for structural injustice, according to the social connection model is a moral and political responsibility to "join with others … to transform the structural processes to make their outcomes less unjust" (96). In contrast to the liability model's focus on assigning responsibility to individual agents, responsibility on the social connection model is "essentially shared" (109-111). Although, according to the social connection model, our responsibility for structural injustice ought not be interpreted as blameworthiness, our forward-looking responsibility is grounded in the fact that we participate in and are thereby connected to the social and institutional processes that bring about injustice (110).

How we fulfill this shared obligation, Young says, is "open and discretionary". The angle from which we ought to approach it will depend on "the social *positions* [we] occupy in relation to one another" and the power, privilege, and ability that we have "within the structural processes [we] are trying to change" (144). We can use these parameters to reason about how to direct our efforts when joining with others to remedy structural injustice.

2.1.3: Young's Practical Concerns: Defensiveness in Political Discussions and Debates

Young theoretical arguments in support of her social connection model have received thorough attention in the philosophical literature on responsibility for structural injustice (see Aragon and Jaggar 2018; Powers and Fayden 2019; McKeown 2021). Her practical concerns are, however, often overlooked. While some who have written about Young's account of responsibility do mention or briefly discuss these practical considerations (Aragon & Jaggar 2018; Nussbaum 2009;), they have not yet received sufficient philosophical analysis. I focus specifically on Young's concern that a focus on backward-looking guilt is often unproductive in political discussions because it produces defensiveness, thus inhibiting the solidarity building and collective action needed to transform social-structural conditions. Young treats this as an additional reason against using the liability model to interpret our responsibility for structural injustice. I depart from her and argue elsewhere (in Chapter 1) that backward-looking blameworthiness constitutes

an important *part* of our responsibility for structural injustice. My argument that follows, however, does not hinge on whether or not one accepts Young's claim that we should not interpret our responsibility for structural injustice as backward-looking blame. The fact of the matter is that many *do* use the language of blame when discussing contributions to structural injustice, so we need to (either way) grapple with the practical concern raised by Young. I argue that, if we want to fulfill our responsibilities in ways that result in concrete change, then Young's practical concern about defensiveness must be given more weight in our philosophical discussions of responsibility and in activist spaces that aim to address structurally rooted harms. In this section, I aim to contribute to that end by explaining and expanding on Young's argument and her related claims that blame creates a focus on the self, divisiveness, mistrust, and resentment.

Let me first make clear that Young's concern—that a focus on guilt and blame produces defensiveness in politics and pushes people away from joining in collective action—rings true with my own lived experience in activist communities and political DIY subcultures. The political left is frequently occupied not only with lambasting those on the other end of the political spectrum with whom we disagree, but also with internal fighting that can at times tear politically progressive organizations and collectives apart before they even get off the ground. This makes many efforts to build organized political collectives unsustainable, but it also makes these spaces unwelcoming to others who might have otherwise been persuaded to join in our activist efforts. Blame-focused in-fighting is a distraction from addressing direct political opposition to our movements and from achieving change at the structural and institutional level. I believe Young's concern also rings true for all of us in how we see political disagreements play out in the news and media—making clear that our current political climate is polarizing and divisive. In the sections that follow, I suggest how we should address this practical barrier while still maintaining (as I argue in Chapter 1) that backward-looking blameworthiness constitutes an important part of our responsibility for structural injustice.

One reason why blaming individuals for structural injustice is unproductive, Young says, is because it "focuses people more on themselves than on the social relations they should be trying to change" (Young 2011, 114). It creates a motivation to defend oneself, one's past actions or character, rather than drawing our attention to the structures and

background conditions that need to be addressed. Young accepts that not everyone will respond to accusations of guilt and blame with denial or attempts to defend themselves. Yet even in those cases, she says, a conception of responsibility as individual guilt or blame can create a self-indulgent preoccupation with ourselves, our actions, and "the state of [our] souls and character" (118). Similarly, in her discussion of white guilt, Sandra Bartky says that mourning and agonizing over determining specific degrees of guilt for (or complicity in) racism can be "a new and insidious form of white-evasion, a back-handed way of keeping ourselves still in the center" (Bartky 2002, 148). Accepting blameworthiness might lead a person to change their own actions, which is most certainly an important part of social transformation; but doing so with the narrow goal of preserving one's self-image as a good and moral person "can distract us from discussing more objectively how social structures operate, how our actions contribute to them, and what can be done to change them" (Young 2011, 118).

Nonetheless, Young says, one of the most common ways of responding to an accusation of blame is to deflect that blame by directing it back onto others. Then,

> A round-robin "blame game" often ensues, with one actor after another being blamed and defending herself by throwing blame on to another. In contexts of structural injustice such blame-switching is particularly easy because others in fact *do* participate by their actions in the processes that produce unjust outcomes. It is difficult to make blame 'stick' to anyone in particular, because almost everyone is involved. The round-robin discourse then paralyzes efforts to address the problems in a forward-looking way, because we are waiting to isolate the parties who should pay for a remedy (Young 2011, 117).

Individuals might engage in this type of blame-switching because they feel that accusations of blame for structural injustice are unfair. The "logic of blame", Young says, expresses that those who are appropriately blamed "bear a singular responsibility" for an outcome that their actions brought about. Defensiveness might then be understood as an "appropriate and natural response" to accusations of guilt for structural injustice (117). When individual

actions of ordinary people are but drops in the bucket, people may feel that structural injustices such as housing inequity, labor exploitation, classist institutional barriers, or climate change are far too vast and beyond their own control for them to be blameworthy. Surely, one might say, there are *other*, more powerful individuals who are responsible for those injustices. A common response to accusations that one's actions contribute to climate change, for example, is to point out that there are others who contribute in larger, more significant ways. While it certainly is true that some individuals (such as those who occupy political, institutional, or economic positions of power) hold *greater* responsibility, the "blame game" functions to separate individuals into powerful wrongdoers or mere victims/bystanders. This oversimplifies the true complexity of the many social and structural processes that underlie injustice. Passing blame around or assigning it only to the most powerful contributors "renders most people passive or comparatively unable to help remedy the problem" (117).

An oversimplistic categorization as people as either powerful wrongdoers or relatively power*less* victims does not only oversimplify the problem and obscure the agency of the many involved, but it also "divides people too, creating mistrust where motivation to cooperate is required" (Young 2011, 117). Young does not elaborate directly on this point about mistrust,[13] but the role of trust in building collective movements towards justice should not be underestimated. In fact, on Meena Krishnamurthy's account, mutual trust is a necessary condition for political solidarity (2013). There are, of course, many instances where mistrust or distrust is warranted—a rational and wise response to circumstances where misplaced trust would make us vulnerable to others who may not have our best interest in mind, especially where there are significant disbalances in power. While mistrust can protect individuals from vulnerability to misuses of power, it can also, however, inhibit the type of openness that fosters opportunities for connection and understanding in interpersonal interactions. An exceedingly rigid categorization of persons as adversaries, brought about by a conception of responsibility as individualized liability

[13] *Responsibility for Justice* was a thoroughly developed but unfinished manuscript at the time of Young's early death. It is quite possible that she would have expanded on this point about trust, and many others, had she been able to see the project to completion. Her discussion of resentment and defensiveness in politics seems to contain a few loose ends that remain untied. I hope my discussion here helps to clarify and build on some of those points.

or blame, inhibits the more fine-grained type of judgement that is needed to determine when mistrust is warranted versus when it might obstruct potential opportunities for productive conversation or for collaborating and working together to address injustice. Mistrust puts us on the defensive, often leading to a breakdown of collaborative dialogue and discussion.

While discussing ways in which a rhetoric of blame can be unproductive, Young says that "public reactions to social problems and political events often appear animated by a spirit of resentment" (Young 2011, 114). Young focuses specifically on the resentment felt by those who are looking for someone to blame. It should be noted, however, that anger in the face of injustice is often a rational affective response, and it can be a powerful tool in prompting action and change (Lorde 1981), and anger that goes unheard can turn into resentment. Those experiencing hardship, suffering, and challenges in their lives' pursuits may feel that there is little that they can do to change their unjust circumstances, especially when injustices are structural. For example, I and many others around me often find ourselves frustrated in experiencing and witnessing the economic turmoil faced by those in our generation who are now entering our thirties without the same prospects of stability that seemed more readily available to previous generations.[14] This has contributed to a shrinking middle class and fewer prospects of upward class mobility for those without generational wealth (Adamczyk 2019). It is especially frustrating to understand how this socio-economic struggle is exacerbated by intersecting axes of oppression such as race, gender, queerness, or disability. In Young's words, "[p]eople undergoing frustration of their plans or undeserved suffering [may] turn their unhappiness outward and seek someone to blame who in turn might suffer in compensation," or others not experiencing certain hardships themselves may "nevertheless become compassionately angry about the bad situation that others are forced to endure, and their reaction is also to find some agents on whom to pin blame and whose punishment might at least give catharsis for their indignation" (Young 2011, 114). Repeated injustices re-open old wounds or inhibit them from healing in the first place. Feelings of frustration, hopelessness, and anger can

[14] Minimum wage and average income rates have not kept pace with the rapidly rising costs of housing, food, tuition, and other living expenses. According to a report from Consumer Affairs, "the national CPI [consumer price index in the U.S..] has increased by over 500% since 1970, while wages have only increased by 80%" (Consumer Affairs Research Team 2023).

understandably turn into resentment, especially when forms of injustice are long-standing, deeply historical, and relentlessly ongoing. We can understand and acknowledge the very real human emotions that can become resentment. Nonetheless, I do share in Young's concern that individually focused blame and the underlying expressions of resentment likely do little to facilitate the solidarity and collective action that is necessary for making tangible impacts on the deep roots of structural injustices.

While Young focuses on resentment expressed by those making accusations, I suggest that there is *another* important location of resentment. When political discussions remain focused on blame, without leaving open possibilities for discussions about tangible solutions or forward-looking paths for righting a wrong,[15] those blamed may struggle to see the purpose of the blame that they are receiving. They may feel that they are *mere* outlets for others' indignation. This, I suggest, may create *reciprocal* resentment from those who are accused of contributing to an injustice. They may begin to resent the movement leveling accusations of guilt against them, become defensive, and turn away from conversations about the injustice at hand. This shuts down opportunities for dialogue that could allow those who are blamed to understand their roles in injustice and what alternatives might be available to them or what they might do to help remedy the problem that others are identifying.[16] Those who occupy privileged social positions should indeed work hard to grapple with such feelings in a way that does not impede dialogue or unduly burden those most impacted by an injustice[17]. Nonetheless, it is important to take note of this additional location of resentment as another barrier that must be considered in our efforts to build solidarity and organize many diverse persons in collective action to resist injustice.

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[15] Many point out the burden of educating the privileged should not fall solely on those who are oppressed. This is especially so now that there is a vast amount information about many social problems readily available on the internet. Nonetheless, those who *do* experience oppression have special insight into what could be done. Conversations about blame should still make clear that there are opportunities for the privileged to educate themselves and make change.

[16] A response, on the part of those who are privileged, of shutting down or becoming defensive when faced with challenging truths can most certainly be linked to what Robin DiAngelo calls "white fragility" (DiAngelo 2018).

[17] In the first article of this thesis, I argue that solidarity requires that we reckon with our complicity. This involves working through the discomfort brought about by recognizing complicity in and responsibility for injustice—without unduly burdening those most impacted by the injustice.

Young is wise to draw our attention to practical considerations regarding how we talk about responsibility for structural injustice. As I have argued above, we must take seriously the fact that defensiveness and resentment serve as very real barriers to discharging our responsibilities for organizing in collective action in the context of complex interpersonal and political dynamics and messy human emotions. While Young frames these practical concerns as additional reason against interpreting our responsibility for structural injustice as liability or blameworthiness, I suggest that there is another way out. In the sections that follow, I describe how a framework of non-punitive accountability can help address Young's important practical concern about defensiveness, while maintaining that (as I have argued elsewhere) some of our responsibility for structural injustice is rightly thought of as guilt.

2.2: Restorative and Transformative Justice

One author who has engaged directly with Young's practical concern about defensiveness is Martha Nussbaum (2009). She says Young's claim that "playing the blame game … makes people feel defensive and evasive" is "a powerful truth, but a partial one" (144). She notes that it can indeed be counterproductive to tell people "all the time how bad they are" but that "guilt is also a powerful incentive to make reparations" (144). None of us wants to think of ourselves as a bad person. We might become defensive to avoid responsibility. We might also, however, recognize when we have acted in ways that do not align with our values or consider that our values may be in need of adjustment. This recognition can motivate us to change our behavior, think more critically about our beliefs, or right the wrongs we realize that we've done. To address Young's concern about defensiveness, Nussbaum argues that, rather than avoiding the language of guilt, we can distinguish between two different ways of ascribing guilt for structural injustice. The first way involves singling out and blaming a few individuals. This method of ascribing guilt is indeed likely to produce defensiveness and evasion when directed at ordinary individuals (rather than, say, people who occupy positions of significant political or institutional power). The second way of ascribing guilt, Nussbaum says, involves doing so more generally. To ascribe guilt this second way—with regards to climate change, for example—would involve saying "that we all participate in a wasteful lifestyle (or almost all of us),

and we need to change" (Nussbaum 2009, 144). I think Nussbaum is on to something important here. She is suggesting that ascriptions of blame for structural injustice should function as invitations for all of us to rethink our actions. They should provide motivation to join with others in learning what justice requires and how we can work towards changing unjust structural conditions together. This idea from Nussbaum is important and warrants further discussion

I argue in this section (2.2) that transformative justice provides a framework for putting Nussbaum's suggestion into practice. It offers us guidance for ascribing guilt, and thus backward-looking responsibility, in a way that is compatible with the forward-looking and compassionate spirit of Young's social connection model.[18] I discuss one reason, not found in Young, for why guilt and blame tend to produce defensiveness so frequently: that is, that our cultural understanding of backward-looking responsibility has been muddied by carceral-punitive approaches to justice. Nussbaum's suggestion about ascribing guilt more generally (rather than ascribing individual guilt) is a helpful starting point, but there is more work to be done. What are we to do if this method of ascribing guilt still produces defensiveness and evasion? Identifying the cultural ideology of punitive justice as an additional reason for defensiveness offers important insight about how we might begin addressing this problem at a deeper level. Luckily, there are already developed frameworks which challenge the logic and function of punitive justice. The literature on transformative justice, and related literatures on restorative justice and prison abolition, have shown that backward-looking responsibility need not be interpreted in a punitive sense. By looking to models of accountability found in these literatures, we can begin disentangling punishment from backward-looking responsibility or liability. In short, I contend that non-punitive approaches to accountability successfully preserve an important sense of liability while *also* helping us to reduce dispositions of defensiveness that are based in fear of social punishment or ostracization.

[18] The few articles that do make use of the language of "transformative climate justice" do so without connecting it to the activist-based literature on "transformative justice" and without discussing what a "transformative" approach could tell us about our practices of ascribing guilt and blame (Krause 2018; Newell et al. 2021). This chapter is unique in bringing these two literatures in conversation with one another.

2.2.1: Introduction to Restorative Justice, Transformative Justice, and the Prison Abolition Movement

Before drawing out how the conception of non-punitive accountability found in transformative justice can help address Young's practical concern about defensiveness, I will first need to introduce readers to transformative justice more broadly. This section will proceed as follows. First, I briefly describe the shortcomings of our conventional framework of punitive justice in order to demonstrate the importance of alternative approaches to addressing wrongs. I then introduce transformative justice, restorative justice and the prison abolition movement: three closely related but distinct frameworks. As I will describe, transformative justice follows restorative justice's focus on repairing ruptured relationships and on community support in accountability, but goes a step further by focusing centrally on the broader structural conditions that enable interpersonal harm to occur. I then describe the central insight I wish to draw from these frameworks: namely, that accountability and backwards-looking responsibility need not be interpreted in a punitive sense.

Before beginning this section, it is important to note that analyses of restorative justice found in legal literature often focus on criminal wrongs. Likewise, while transformative justice is rooted in political activism rather than legal analyses, it too tends to focus on harms that breach our generally accepted norms against, for example, intimate partner violence or sexual abuse. Thus, some of the discussion that follows departs from my focus on collective contributions to injustice that fall *within* generally accepted norms and practices. Nonetheless, I introduce these approaches broadly in order to provide richer context for the central insight that I aim to draw from these literatures, to motivate the potential of these practices as alternatives to punitive justice, and to help familiarize my readers with how these frameworks are applied in practice.

2.2.2: Punitive Justice

Many who write and speak about restorative and transformative justice begin explaining them by first comparing these frameworks to our conventional model of justice:

punitive justice[19] (much in the same way that Young describes her "social connection model" of responsibility by contrasting it with the conventional "liability model" of responsibility). Ruth Morris, a Canadian Quaker and advocate for transformative justice, says that our punitive system of justice focuses on two main questions in response to crime: First, "[w]ho did it?" and second, "[h]ow can we punish them?" (Morris 2000). We can note here the remarkable similarity to how Young describes the focus of the liability model of responsibility. The liability model, in legal contexts and when applied in everyday moral life, focuses on identifying "who dunnit" with the purpose of "sanctioning, punishing, or exacting compensation or redress" (Young 2011, 98). In the same way that the liability model of responsibility is derived from the systems of criminal justice and tort law, punitive justice is the paradigmatic conception of justice at work in our legal institutions and practices.

The punitive approach to justice focuses myopically on punishing the person who commits a crime or causes harm. Once someone is punished, we are to assume that justice has been served and we can move on. This, however, does not uncover or address the conditions that led a person to commit a crime or enact harm in the first place, nor does it focus on the healing of the person or people who were harmed. In a public talk, Marlee Liss shared her experience of going through a criminal justice trial to convict the man who raped her (Liss 2023). After the rape occurred, Liss decided to press charges, pursuing the only path she knew of for addressing the traumatic harm that had been done to her. She notes, in speaking about this experience, that she and the pain she experienced was completely decentered from the conversations that took place in the legal processes of punitive justice. Especially telling is the fact that the language used in legal proceedings did not discuss her rape as a crime done against her. Rather, her role in these proceedings was that of a "witness to a crime against the crown" (Liss 2023). In this way, our conventional approach to justice does not center victims' healing nor does it center the

[19] Punitive justice is often understood as retributive justice. According to retributive justice, punishment is intrinsically justified on the basis of an axiomatic principle which holds that offenders deserve to receive suffering in equal proportion to the suffering that their crime caused (Hoskins and Duff 2022; Bedau 1978). Retribution is not, however, the only way that advocates of punitive justice seek to justify punishment. Others turn towards consequentialist justifications for punishment, such as the view that punishment serves the instrumental function of deterring crime (Hoskins and Duff 2022; Bedau 1978). Although many in the restorative and transformative justice literatures refer to "retributive justice", I use the term "punitive justice" in order to set aside debates about the nature of punishment.

rehabilitation of those who have committed a crime. Rather, according to the conventional punitive approach, "the state is the victim and justice is primarily the state's business" (Zehr 2009).

Ruth Morris writes that "the [punitive] justice system approach is a dismal failure in meeting the healthy needs of victims" (Morris 2000). Morris worked closely with victims of crime to identify what they need most in order to heal. Morris was surprised to find that, contrary to the reasoning implicit in punitive justice, revenge was not one of victims' central needs. Rather, the five basic needs of victims that Morris identified are: answers, recognition of the wrong, safety, restitution, and to find some sense of meaning or significance in what happened to them (Morris 2000, 9). Without going into further depth here, punitive justice is not well-suited for meeting these needs because, as we saw in Liss' case above, "[v]ictims find that they are mere footnotes in the process we call justice" (Zehr 1985).

Leading practitioner and theorist in the field of restorative justice, Howard Zehr, says that alongside not meeting the needs of victims, punitive justice is also not very successful in doing what we assume it ought to do regarding offenders. We presume in the case of legal punitive justice, that punishment serves the function of deterring crime[20]. Zehr writes, however, that the current system "is not preventing offenders from committing crimes, as we know well from recidivism figures. And it is not healing them. On the contrary, the experience of punishment and imprisonment is deeply damaging, often encouraging rather than discouraging criminal behavior" (Zehr 1985). Zehr, alongside many others in the field, argue that punitive justice does not *actually* hold offenders accountable in a meaningful sense, because criminal justice processes do not encourage an *honest* taking of responsibility for what one has done. Danielle Sered points out that "[i]f you are among the people who get caught for what you do, the one person who is formally on your side is your defense attorney" and, often, "the first thing that lawyer tells you to say […] is "not guilty" (Sered 2019, 92).

"Judges often talk about accountability," Zehr says, but what they usually mean by this is "that when you do something wrong, you must take your punishment" (1985). Sered

[20] Similarly, we presume that practices of ascribing guilt and blame in everyday moral life are meant to dissuade or change the behavior of those who are blamed.

argues, however, that receiving punishment is passive. It does not require work, dignity, or agency. It simply requires that one passively sustain suffering (Sered 2019, 91).

> No one in prison is required to face the human impacts of what they have done, to come face to face with the people whose lives are changed as a result of their decisions, to own their responsibility for those decisions and the pain they have caused, and to do the extraordinarily hard work of answering for that pain and becoming someone who will not commit that harm again (Sered 2019, 91).

Prison, as the paradigmatic tool of punitive justice, brutalizes and dehumanizes the individuals who end up there but it also, Sered argues, protects and excuses them from the "human burdens" of facing the impacts of their actions, "render[ing] the most important kinds of human reckoning nearly impossible" (91). It does not address the underlying causes of criminal behavior (which are most often poverty, trauma, mental illness, lack of resources and support) or seem to adequately prepare those who are incarcerated for re-entering the human community. In fact, a common concern with incarceration is that "when the justice system sends offenders to jail it only makes them better criminals when they are reintegrated back into the community" (Chartland and Horn 2016, 4), leaving them with fewer opportunities for employment or options other than resorting back to crime.

It is not only that this system is not healing for either victims or offenders, but it is also a source of institutionalized racism. Black, Indigenous, and communities of color are policed and incarcerated at disproportionate rates (Morris 2000, 6). Discriminatory racist bias takes place on the streets and in courtrooms, creating cycles of oppression and reifying the socio-economic conditions rooted in centuries of historical injustice and racism (Davis 2003). For all of these reasons, among others, critics argue that we need alternatives to the conventional carceral-punitive methods of responding to wrongdoing.

2.2.3: Restorative Justice

One alternative model to punitive justice is "restorative justice" which "became a global social movement […] in the 1990s as a result of learning from indigenous practices"

(Braithwaite 1999; cited in Hughes and Mossman 2004). In a report for the Canadian Department of Justice, Larry Chartrand and Kanatase Horn say that restorative justice,

> can be generally understood as an approach to crime and conflict that brings the victim, the offender, members of the larger community, and oftentimes professional service providers together into a non-hierarchal setting in order to collectively address a harm that was committed and to set a path towards reconciliations between all relevant parties (Chartland and Horn 2016).

Restorative justice practices and programs usually include options for victim-offender mediation, family group conferencing, and "circle" programs (i.e., sentencing circles, releasing circles, and healing circles) (Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime 2011, cited in Charland and Horn, 4-5). "Circle" practices are rooted in the cultural traditions of Indigenous First Nations, particularly from Western Canada. These can involve a talking stick or talking feather "so that everyone has a chance to speak and be heard, which reflects the Indigenous principle of including all voices" (Chartland and Horn 2016, 5). Restorative justice's focus on how harm disrupts relations within a community reflects the emphasis on kinship obligations found in Indigenous legal traditions. In other words, restorative justice looks beyond the singular person who committed a crime—bringing to light how crime disrupts relations within the broader community and aiming uncover how the community can best support the healing of both the offender and the victim(s). This departure from the conventional approaches of the punitive legal system encourages us to see crime and harm as relational: that is, as embedded in specific communities and interpersonal contexts, rather than as wrongs committed out of the blue by individuals abstracted from their social context.

Restorative justice practices and circles, particularly healing circles, typically occur after an offender has already been through a rehabilitation process. In circle practices, offenders are encouraged to "talk about their personal healing journeys in a way that touches on how they dealt with the underlying factors that led to them getting in trouble in the first place" (Chartland and Horn, 5). This can be a particularly effective way of reducing future crime because it facilitates honest interrogation of one's actions, which punitive legal

proceedings tend not to do. The articulation of how a person has understood and then addressed the reasons for their criminal behavior is important, not only for the offender's rehabilitation, but for the victim's healing and recovery. It can provide a sense of closure for victims to see offenders address their behavior and work towards becoming a person who will not commit similar wrongs in the future. Offenders are "given the opportunity to make apologies and hear how they can make reparations" (Chartland and Horn 2016). By hearing directly from the person and community harmed, offenders are encouraged to listen not only to the impacts of their actions but also to requests about how they can repair (though not erase) the harms that have been done and begin to repair ruptured community trust. This centers the victims' voices and healing, rather than conceptualizing criminal harms as depersonalized crimes against the abstract "state".

2.2.4: Transformative Justice

Restorative justice gets us further than punitive justice in terms of understanding the relational nature of crime and harm, centering both victim healing, offender rehabilitation, and family/community support, but many argue that it still falls short of appreciating the full weight of social and structural conditions underlying most crimes. Some critique the approach of restorative justice as still too narrow and individual in focus. adrienne maree brown offers an example of someone who steals a purse. If we focus only on restoring the ruptured relationship and community trust, then the person who stole may offer an apology, do community service, or other acts that may help to restore the affected relationships to where they were before. But, maree brown says, repairing relationships is (on its own) insufficient "because if the original conditions were unjust, then returning to those original conditions is not actually justice". In this case, if the person who stole the purse returns what was taken and offers their time in community service then they may have worked towards repairing ruptured community trust, but will still be in the conditions of poverty that led them to resort to theft in the first place (brown et al. 2020).

Likewise, Ruth Morris writes that "the idea of restoring justice implie(s) that we had justice, and lost it". She reminds us that "most offenders are, more than the average person, victims of distributive injustice" and asks whether we want to "restore offenders to the marginalized, enraged, disempowered condition most were in just before the offense"

(Morris 2000, 19). Moreover, some claim that restorative justice practitioners working within a legal context are complicit in the criminal justice system that functions to perpetuate and reinforce institutional racism and classism.

Transformative justice, "[a]t its most basic […] seeks to respond to violence without creating more violence" by, say, calling the police. It is a prison-abolitionist framework developed by communities of color which seeks to address harm without relying on the state "(e.g. police, prisons, the criminal legal system, I.C.E., foster care system)" (Mingus 2019). This approach to justice "recognizes that we must transform the conditions which help to create acts of violence or make them possible. Often this includes transforming harmful oppressive dynamics, our relationships to each other, and our communities at large" (Mingus 2019). Transformative justice interventions can take many forms, including supporting the victim in their healing, working with the person who caused harm to take meaningful accountability, building community members capacities for responding to harm (Mingus 2019), and "transforming the community and social conditions that create and perpetuate [abuse and harm]" (Generation Five 2007). Practices of transformative justice are most often implemented in instances of interpersonal harm, such as intimate partner abuse or sexual violence. Transformative justice advocates aim to help us build alternatives to calling the police or pressing criminal charges, which many see as creating potential for additional harm or danger, especially for people of color. Transformative alternatives might include a "community accountability process" where members of the community—those who do transformative justice mediation professionally—or mental health providers can "work directly with the person who harmed to take accountability for the harm they've caused"[21] (Mingus 2019).

While we might think that interpersonal harms, such as intimate partner abuse, are quite different from our contributions to collective harms like climate change, transformative justice advocates highlight that gender-based sexual violence is not merely a problem of individual moral failing but is fostered by sexism, misogyny, heterosexism, and other cultural attitudes that diminish women's humanity and agency. Thus, the aim of

[21] It is important to note that alternative interventions like community accountability processes may not be suitable or appropriate in all circumstances. Practicing transformative justice in circumstances of serious interpersonal harm requires training, experience, resources, and ample support for all involved.

transformative justice is not only to address particular instances of harm but also to "transform the conditions which help to create acts of violence or make them possible" (Mingus 2019). Doing so involves broader political work. We can think, for example, of the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 and the calls to "defund the police". This movement highlights how practices of policing and incarceration lead to disproportionate harm towards the Black community, as the murder of George Floyd did. Calls to defund the police do not mean that we ought to immediately end policing without first putting other mechanisms for handling crime and conflict in its place. Rather, they urge us to redirect resources and funding from these institutions towards social/psychological support and resources for those who are vulnerable—gradually moving towards addressing the social and economic causes of crime at their roots instead of responding punitively after harm has already occurred.

Mingus writes that "[transformative justice] acknowledges that we must work to end conditions such as capitalism, poverty, trauma, isolation, heterosexism, cis-sexism, white supremacy, misogyny, ableism, mass incarceration, displacement, war, gender oppression and xenophobia if we are truly going to end cycles of intimate and sexual violence" (Mingus 2019). Ultimately, I see transformative justice as a practice that takes harm and the need for accountability seriously. It is an approach that recognizes how, in virtue of our interdependence, we are all vulnerable to experiencing harm *and* causing harm. Transformative justice aims to bring to light the unjust background conditions that enable interpersonal and structural harm to occur and is, at its core, about "having the courage to attempt to address the ills of this complex society with love, empathy, and compassion" (Lee and Pippen 2020).

2.2.5: Non-Punitive Accountability

Now that I have explained critiques of punitive approaches to justice and the alternative approaches of restorative and transformative justice, I will explain the central insight that I believe can help us address Young's practical concern about defensiveness in response to accusations of blameworthiness. The insight is that transformative justice centers accountability—which involves both backward and forward-looking senses of responsibility—without conflating backward-looking responsibility with punishment.

Danielle Sered is the Executive Director of *Common Justice*, an "alternative-to-incarceration and victim-service program in the United States that focuses on violent felonies in the adult courts" ("Our Work", Common Justice). In her book, *Until We Reckon: Violence, Mass Incarceration, and a Road to Repair,* she writes that our culture "has equated punishment and accountability, but the two are not the same" (Sered 2019, 91). I have already, in section 2.2.1, discussed some of Sered's critiques of punitive justice and her reasons for believing that "prison is a poor vehicle for accountability" (Sered 2019, 91). Recall that she describes how, in conventional criminal justice processes, the one person who is meant to have "your interest at heart, […] [who sees] your humanity more than others do, [and has] heard your whole story" is your defense attorney, whose role is to "stand[s] on the side of denial" (92). The attorney instructs you about what to say, not based on the whole truth of what occurred and why but, rather, based on the particular plea you have negotiated. Then, you may or may not be sent to prison, where it is a faux pas to ask what you are in for and where you are "insulate[d] from the impacts of what [you] have done" (Sered 2019, 92-93). Receiving punishment requires that one sustain some form of suffering but does not require that one foster a meaningful sense of agency nor a true reckoning with how one's actions have impacted others.

In an interview with *Yes! Magazine* transformative justice activist, Mariame Kaba, remarks that "[t]here's an assumption that being anti-punishment means that you're not pro-accountability; [but] that couldn't be further from the truth" (Kaba et al. 2021). Teasing out the distinction between accountability and punishment can be challenging at first, Kaba says, because "everything [to do with accountability] in our culture is about coercion; dangling the idea of punishment is meant to keep you on the "right path"" (Kaba et al. 2021). But in a culture where we have conflated accountability with punishment, there is "very little incentive to take accountability for anything" (Kaba et al. 2021). In disentangling punishment from accountability, abolitionists, restorative justice and transformative justice activists define accountability in a way that includes both backward and forward-looking elements of responsibility. According to Sered, accountability involves the following five key elements:

> (1) acknowledging responsibility for one's actions; (2) acknowledging the impact of one's actions on others; (3) expressing genuine remorse; (4) taking actions to repair the harm to the degree possible, […] guided when feasible by the people harmed […]; and (5) no longer committing similar harm (Sered 2019, 96).

She discusses each of these elements at length in her book, which I will not recount here. But we should note that, as Sered points out, receiving punishment is passive while accountability is not. Non-punitive accountability is "active, rigorous, and demanding of the responsible person's full humanity" (Sered 2019, 96). While there is not yet empirical data regarding outcomes of transformative justice interventions specifically, restorative justice advocates argue that non-punitive approaches to accountability have promising results for both the offender and the victim. Studies find that both offenders and victims consider conferencing practices to be "a fairer and more satisfactory process" and that participating in restorative justice "was related to lower post-incident stress among victims" compared to punitive justice processes (Calhoun 2013, 5). Additionally, while research on recidivism rates after restorative processes compared to conventional processes is limited, "a number of existing evaluations have in fact demonstrated that [restorative justice] programs can reduce the likelihood of reoffending" (Calhoun 2013, 5).

I believe that the success of restorative justice processes as alternatives to the conventional punitive approach show that we can in fact disentangle punishment from accountability, including the elements of accountability that are backward-looking in nature. Restorative justice, transformative justice, and prison abolition advocates have worked hard to tease apart this distinction, providing us with alternate interpretations of accountability that center victim healing and offender rehabilitation. Genuinely appreciating this wisdom, I believe, enables us to preserve the importance of backward-looking responsibility—of owning up to and learning from the ways we have fallen short—while recognizing each other in the fullness of our humanity and maintaining a focus on fulfilling our forward-looking responsibilities to do better. I will explain, in the section that follows, how teasing apart the distinction between accountability and punishment can help us address Young's concern about defensiveness in political discussions about responsibility for structural injustice.

2.3: Applying the Insight from Transformative Justice to Young's Social Connection Model

I believe that, if Iris Marion Young were alive now, she would likely be involved in conversations about restorative and transformative justice. I see a close parallel between these approaches and her social connection model, and one contribution of this chapter has been to bring these frameworks into direct conversation with each other. Young's model even uses the language of *transforming* the structural processes that result in injustice. Both the social connection model and transformative justice focus on addressing the broader social and structural conditions that allow injustice and harm to occur, recognizing that we are deeply relationally interdependent with one another and the cultures and communities we are embedded in. Likewise, there is a close parallel between the liability model and punitive justice. In fact, they are essentially one and the same, arising from our conventional legal approaches to wrongdoing and harm. The parallels that I see are this: according to the punitive conception of justice, "responsibility" is understood as it is on the liability model: that is, in terms of liability, guilt, or blameworthiness. Likewise, under a transformative conception of justice, "responsibility" also centrally involves the kind of responsibility described in Young's social connection model. Readers need not immediately accept the goal of prison abolition, nor reject the utility of punishment in all contexts, to see how disentangling punishment from accountability or liability helps us to address Young's practical concerns. I believe that, whether or not readers are persuaded about the potential of restorative and transformative justice as alternatives to our conventional criminal justice processes, it would be a missed opportunity not to incorporate the practical wisdom and insights from these movements into our analysis of Young's social connection model.

Elsewhere, I have argued, alongside others, that Young's social connection model of responsibility for structural injustice would be made stronger by preserving a sense of backward-looking blameworthiness in our interpretation of responsibility for structural injustice. However, we still must contend with Young's important practical concern that the rhetoric of blame tends to express resentment and prompt defensiveness, thus pushing away those who might have otherwise been called to join in our collective movements towards justice. Recall Martha Nussbaum's recommendation that we distinguish between

two different ways of ascribing guilt. The first way focuses on singling out specific individuals to blame. The second way ascribes guilt more generally, by pointing out that we all contribute to structural injustice by participating in the social, institutional, and economic processes that result in injustice. I suggest that restorative and transformative justice provide us with frameworks and guidance for taking up this brief recommendation from Nussbaum.

There are a variety of reasons that people may become defensive in response to claims of guilt for structural injustice, such as frustration about the immensity of the problem relative to one's small role within it, a resistance to changing one's behavior, a lack of available alternatives, or fear of reprisal or punishment. While all of these sources of defensiveness are worth attending to, I am focused here on the last of these reasons. I suggest that at least some dispositions towards defensiveness are rooted in or made worse by the fact that we have culturally conflated backward-looking responsibility with punishment. As previously noted, Mariame Kaba argues that our culture's punitive approach to justice "is about coercion; [where] dangling the idea of punishment is meant to keep you on the "right path"." While the threat of punishment may serve as a deterrent in some cases, it also creates little incentive to take accountability for wrongs that have already been done (Kaba et al. 2021). Whether we are talking about legal punishments or less formal responses to wrongs—like social ostracization, shame, or social exile—we must recognize that rituals of punishment do not create an environment where it feels safe to admit our own faults, mistakes, and shortcomings, even when we feel remorseful and would genuinely like to take responsibility and do better.

Think, for example, of the slogan "kill your local rapist" which was more common in earlier stages of online third-wave feminism, or misandrist feminist movements that cast men, in general, as enemies to women's empowerment. Threatening murder, might I suggest, does very little to encourage the average man to closely examine the small or large ways in which they contribute to a culture that devalues women and women's agency. It also does very little to invite men to join and support the feminist movement as allies, where they can learn about the structural causes of gender-based sexual violence and what they could do to help address this cultural problem. A punitive attitude towards men's responsibility encourages men to distance themselves from facing the ways that they might,

intentionally or not, contribute to the conditions and social norms that normalize sexual violence, or from acknowledging mistakes they have made in the past, such as negligently sleeping with someone who was too intoxicated or overlooking subtle signs of women's discomfort at their advances. We need to, I argue alongside transformative justice and prison abolition advocates, work towards building a world where we can own up to our mistakes and reckon with our complicity in structural harms, learning from the past in order to build a better and safer world moving forward. Rather than casting men as monsters and as the enemy, we need to advocate for resources and organizations that teach men to change misogynistic attitudes and patterns of abusive behavior. There are some such organizations, such as "Changing Ways" in London, Ontario, which provides counselling and support for "those wishing to end and take responsibility for their abusive behaviour" (Changing Ways).

Now, we might wonder, how can this insight which focuses on interpersonal harm help us in cases of collective structural injustices, like climate change. The average person's contributions to climate change are not punished in any formal sense because behaving in these ways is, in fact, the norm. Some people are in denial about the impacts of human activity on the environment and simply need more information and education. But we are likely to push those people away by making the political left an inhospitable place for reasonable disagreements, for open discussion with those lacking information, and for productive conversations with those who find they are limited in their feasible alternatives. Punitive attitudes encourage individuals to "call each other out" for participating in unjust structures (i.e., driving gas-fueled vehicles, taking flights, buying "fast fashion" clothing, or using single-use products). We are encouraged to "call out" those we find blameworthy and to "tear that person or group to shreds" (brown 2020). adrienne maree brown poignantly asks us to consider whether we are going to "call each other out until there's no one left besides us" (brown 2020). This is not to say that we should not hold each other responsible for our contributions to injustice; but holding each other responsible is only effective if it encourages genuine accountability and change. We look backwards, not for the purpose of creating shame and enacting punishment, but to learn from the past and do differently moving forward.

Developing political strategies to change unjust systems entails having "discussions and debate about alternative courses of action, how they should be implemented, and what their likely consequences will be" (Young 2011, 113). This type of deliberation is no easy task. Within such debates, Young says, we reasonably expect that disagreements and conflict will occur (113), even between those who share many of their core political convictions. The threat of shame and reprisal, however, can discourage individuals from asking questions about different perspectives that they might not understand or immediately agree with. By discouraging conversation about reasonable disagreements, an internalized logic of punitive justice inhibits opportunities for deepening our understanding of social issues and for developing more nuanced solutions.

Some of the *most* heated political debates, however, involve disagreements about whether an injustice has occurred in the first place. These types of debates can be particularly challenging to navigate and are perhaps the most likely to bring about defensiveness. Nonetheless, engaging in meaningful debate with those who disagree with us on this more fundamental level holds significant political potential. Given the immensity of the task of transforming deeply embedded social conditions, we need as many people as possible acting and organizing in ways that challenge those conditions rather than reinforcing the status quo. Responding to such disagreements with shame or exile is unlikely to motivate others to join us in this task.

We need a conception of responsibility that allows such discussions to result in the kind of collection action that is needed to address structural injustice. Disentangling punishment from accountability can help us to navigate disagreements and conflict in ways that are less likely to create defensiveness, while still maintaining that individuals are blameworthy when they act in ways that reinforce unjust social processes. Doing so allows us to preserve an interpretation of responsibility for structural injustice that includes elements of backward-looking responsibility, while still addressing Young's important practical concern about defensiveness and staying true to the forward-looking emphasis and pragmatic spirit of her social connection model.

2.4: Conclusion

This article has focused on Young's concern that blame in political debates is likely to produce defensiveness and push individuals away from collective action. I have argued that it is not just guilt and blame that cause such responses, but the fact that we have culturally conflated backward-looking responsibility with punishment, which incentivizes individuals to deflect and avoid blame. We can address Young's practical concern, I have argued, by drawing insight from the transformative justice movement which has helpfully distinguished between punishment and accountability. Accountability for structural injustice, understood through this lens, can be understood an active process involving both backward and forward-looking responsibility. It involves acknowledging and accepting when we have acted in ways that are blameworthy, working (on our own and with others) towards remediating harms we have contributed to, and using knowledge we have gained to avoid (when possible) using our agency in ways that contribute to and reinforce structurally unjust processes.

My goal in making this argument and bringing these bodies of literature in conversation with each other has been not only to contribute to our analyses of responsibility for structural injustice, but also to demonstrate the value of restorative and transformative alternatives to punitive justice. Again, readers need not immediately accept the goal of prison abolition or be wholly convinced about the feasibility of transformative justice in order to see how insights from these movements can help to address Young's practical concerns. It should be clear, however, that we need an approach to justice and an interpretation of responsibility that will help us build strong collective movements, by recognizing each of us in our full and imperfect humanity.

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Chapter 3
Phenomenological “World”-Traveling and Solidarity in the Digital Age

3.0: Introduction

We live in a deeply interconnected world. This has always been the case, but it is especially so now. The social structures, institutions, and global economic systems that we collectively participate in make it such that our choices and actions impact many others, even those across the globe. While these collective structures give us frameworks for organizing our lives and pursuits, some also lead to unintended conditions of crisis which threaten human flourishing. These include the climate crisis, widespread housing crises, and ongoing racial, gender, and economic class disparities. The fact that these crises are structural and collective in nature makes them especially difficult to remediate. According to political philosopher, Iris Marion Young, structural injustices can only be adequately addressed through collective action of many individuals joining together to change the conditions that cause them (Young 2011, 111). In other words, we need *political solidarity* to address the structural processes that result in injustice (Young 2011, 121). In addition to the economic and institutional systems that intertwine us with one another, innovations in digital technologies allow us to communicate near-instantaneously with those both near and far from us. In fact, social media platforms now have a ubiquitous presence in most of our lives—mediating many of our social interactions with one another. With this in mind, this paper aims to consider the role that social media and the algorithms used on these platforms play in shaping relations of political solidarity.

To take up this task, I turn to María Lugones’ concept “world”-traveling, which she describes as the skillful practice of stepping into others’ phenomenological constructions of their “worlds”. I argue, alongside other philosophers, that this an important phenomenological practice for building political solidarity across differences in identity (Lugones 1987; Fulfer 2020; Jones and Fulfer 2024). In seeking to better understand how we can build political solidarity in praxis, I explore what the practice of “world”-traveling might look like when taken up in the novel context of the contemporary digital age—where social media and the algorithms at work on those platforms play a powerful role in social

activism and solidarity building. Afterall, understanding “world”-traveling and solidarity in theory has no impact if we do not integrate these practices into our real lives. More specifically, I explore whether it might be possible to engage in “world”-traveling through the medium of digital technologies and social media platforms. Ultimately, I argue that social media can, in some instances, facilitate opportunities for “world”-traveling as a solidarity-building practice, but that we should proceed with caution and careful consideration, for the reasons I outline below.

This article will proceed as follows. In section 3.1, I first explain Lugones’ concept of “world”-traveling and introduce several accounts of political solidarity which highlight the relational, affective, and embodied features of solidarity. I then draw on these accounts to offer my own definition of ‘whole-hearted political solidarity’. Then, I attempt to offer a more explicit articulation of how “world”-traveling can help us cultivate relational political solidarity with one another in social movements for justice. In section 3.2, I apply my account of whole-hearted political solidarity to the context of social media and explore two barriers to “world”-traveling and building solidarity online. First, I discuss how algorithms on social media have a homogenizing effect on the content presented to us. By boosting content that resonates with dominant perspectives, algorithms can reproduce social stereotypes and create gaps in knowledge about the deep diversity within communities we aim to join in solidarity with. I explain how this can contribute to what Mariana Ortega calls “loving, knowing ignorance” (Ortega 2006) and the related concept of “performative allyship” (Kutlaca and Radke 2022). Second, I argue that, while social media can indeed help us to learn about the experiences and perspectives of those who occupy differently marginalized social positions, the idea that we can travel to others’ “worlds” (as a solidarity-building practice) through online social media engagement remains dubious. “World”-traveling and building meaningfully relational political solidarity require engaging with “flesh and blood people” (Ortega 2006, 69). In short, “world”-traveling requires much more than merely bearing witness to distant others’ experiences online. Relatedly, political solidarity, especially the robust sense of solidarity that I refer to as ‘whole-hearted political solidarity’ requires that we cultivate certain relational-affective attitudes and engage in embodied practices of collective care, which cannot be achieved through cursory online engagement alone or by, for example, merely

posting/re-posting a statement of solidarity without actually joining others in the hard work of political organizing. Nonetheless, bearing these challenges in mind, I aim, not just to critique, but to point towards some of the ways we *can* use these platforms as helpful tools in collective movements towards justice. Thus, in section 3.3, I discuss the positive potential of social media for engaging in practices of "world"-traveling and solidarity building. I then conclude in section 3.4 by briefly summarizing my argument and offering a few small practical suggestions.

3.1: "World"-Traveling and Solidarity

3.1.1: Phenomenological "World"-Traveling

In her influential paper, "Playfulness, "World'-Traveling, and Loving Perception", feminist philosopher María Lugones develops an account of "world"-traveling, which she describes as a skillful and creative practice of stepping into different phenomenological constructions of the world (Lugones 1987). While Lugones resists giving a fixed definition for her use of the term "worlds", she means "worlds" in the sense of relationally and socially constructed meanings that are given life in particular contexts. The idea of phenomenological "worlds" can be made clearer by thinking about how different contexts and environments bring out different sides of ourselves—different modes of speaking, acting, and engaging with others and the environment we are embedded in.

Janet Jones offers an example that helpfully elucidates the idea of moving through different phenomenological "worlds" (Jones 2020). In her blog piece, "World-Traveling, Envy, and the Role of Emotions in Solidarity", she describes feeling at home in "the world of academia" and the feeling of effortlessness that comes from years of talking with others about philosophy. She then describes the feeling of going back to her family home to visit her parents—translating philosophical ideas into more accessible terms, in a mix of English

and Korean[22] (Jones 2020). When we are "at home" in a particular "world", we feel relatively confident in knowing the language and the norms, and we generally know how to connect with those who are there with us. In academic "worlds", like Jones describes, we have shared language to discuss complex theoretical concepts. Feeling at home in such "worlds" may mean that these discussions feel exciting and illuminating rather than, say, elitist and opaque. In this context, we may see and understand ourselves a certain way—as academics, philosophers, educators, researchers, colleagues, friends, and so on.

Now, contrast the phenomenological or experiential feeling of being in that kind of "world"–in an academic context—with the feeling of sitting around the dinner table with your family, visiting your childhood home for the holidays. In *this* context—this "world" at home with family—the shared understandings of ourselves may be quite different. In my own case, I embody a phenomenological construction of myself as my parents' rebellious but loving daughter, the queer cousin, and the niece and granddaughter who goes to "school" in Canada. I am understood as an "academic" in some sense but embody that construction of myself quite differently. If I were to use the same language around the dinner table with family as I do in academic spaces, I would not be understood in the way that I am when speaking with those who share a familiarity with the language of philosophy. I feel "at home" here too, but in an astoundingly different way. While I am the same person in both contexts, they highlight different but equally real parts of myself. They feel like different "worlds".

María Lugones argues that the practice of moving through and inhabiting others' "worlds" facilitates opportunities for better understanding others and their experiences, without erasing the differences that exist between us. She discusses how women of color in the U.S. are particularly skilled in "world"-traveling, mostly out of necessity and the "compulsory nature" of traveling into the dominant White/Anglo constructions of the

[22] This is often referred to as "code-switching". Code-switching refers to the practice of shifting the way you speak and behave in relation to different social contexts, based on the social norms and expectations at work in those contexts (Sharma 2023). Black individuals, for example, may switch from speaking in African-American Vernacular English to speaking in Standard American English in a workplace, in order to avoid facing social stereotypes and prejudice, which could negatively affect their employment and the treatment they receive. People might also "code-switch" in other contexts in order to positively signal their group membership to others—i.e. a queer person might speak in a more openly "queer" way when amongst other queer individuals, compared to how they might speak in a workplace or other spaces where it might not feel safe to be openly queer.

world (Lugones 1987, 3). The compulsory nature of traveling into dominant White constructions of the "world" has, Lugones says, obscured the complex skills involved in doing so and the tremendous value of this ability. She recommends that women of color in the U.S. learn "to travel to each other's "worlds"" as a form of "cross-cultural and cross-racial loving" (3-4). Though Lugones is writing specifically to women of color, her concept of "'world'-traveling" is often invoked in the feminist philosophical literature as a practice that the privileged can take up, in order to come to better understand the perspectives and experiences of those who are oppressed in ways that the privileged are not (Ortega 2006; Fulfer 2020; Superson 2023). It can be used, for example, as a practice for white women to "repair the mis-recognition that comes when [they] fail to recognize the uniqueness of racialized women" (Fulfer 2020). In addition to revealing how others, especially those who are oppressed, see and understand themselves and their experiences, "world"-traveling can also help the privileged come to understand how the oppressed regard those who are privileged in relation[23] (Superson 2023). I will return to these points in more depth in section 3.1.3 but, in short, Lugones and those who take up her concept of "world"-traveling suggest that it is a practice that can be fruitfully used to reveal our plurality by providing a clearer view of the differences that exist between us, and the differences in our experiences and the ways we understand ourselves and one another.

"World"-traveling in the sense that Lugones recommends does not mean entering others' "worlds" in just any way, but in a *loving* way. Truly traveling to others' "worlds", she says, involves embodying the epistemic stance of "loving perception". Lugones draws this concept from the work of Marilyn Frye, who contrasts the "loving eye" with the "arrogant eye" (Lugones 1987, 5; Frye 1983). According to Frye, those who perceive arrogantly organize meaning through reference to themselves and their own interests. Through an arrogant lens, those outside of you are interpreted as being either for or against

[23] Not everyone agrees that the privileged can truly "world"-travel to the "worlds" of those who are oppression. As Anita Superson points out in her *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on "Feminist Moral Psychology", Laurence Thomas cases doubt upon the possibility that the privileged can truly come to understand and appreciate the experiences of the oppressed (Thomas 1999; Superson 2023). While Thomas is correct that there are times when we should not rely on our own understanding of others' experiences and, instead, defer to their testimonies and judgment about those circumstances, I contend that it would be uncharitable to Lugones to assume that she is suggesting that "world"-traveling could enable us to understand others' lives as if they were our own and, further, that it would be morally problematic to use this concern about the epistemic limitations of "world"-traveling as reason not to *try* to better understand the experiences of those who are oppressed in ways that we are not.

you. Others either verify the arrogant perceiver's viewpoint or are taken to be wrong, bad, or mistaken. Conversely, one who sees through a loving eye "knows that to know the seen, one must consult something other than one's own will and interests and fears and imagination" (Frye 1983, 75). Others are understood as independent beings with their own experiences, interests, knowledge, and desires. A loving perceiver looks, listens, questions, and checks their assumptions (Frye 1983). "World"-traveling through loving perception involves true-hearted attempts to understand others' perspectives and experiences—to go into their "world" and be open to witnessing *oneself* as constructed differently within that "world", compared to how our self-understanding is constructed in "worlds" we might be more accustomed to. It requires the hard work of releasing our attachments to the idea that we "have it all figured out". Instead, traveling to other "worlds" calls for a loving curiosity and for flexibility in the schemas we use to make sense of the world, ourselves, and others.

Lugones also suggests that the practice of "world"-traveling be animated by an attitude of "playfulness". It may, at first, seem odd or even irreverent to enter others' "worlds" with a playful attitude, but the type of playfulness Lugones describes is not equivalent to recklessness or carelessness. Lugones describes this type of playfulness as involving "an openness to being a fool, which is a combination of not worrying about competence, not being self-important, […] and finding ambiguity [to be] a source of wisdom and delight" (17). She contrasts this type of playfulness with more traditionally masculinist conceptions of "play", according to which play is a type of competition. In this latter sense of play, there are rules, tests of competence, sometimes hostility. "The players are imbued with *self-importance*" (Lugones 1987, 15). There are winners and there are losers. This type of play, Lugones asserts, is not conducive to "world"-traveling. Agonistic attitudes of self-importance and competition do not enable one to authentically enter into the world of others but, rather, manifest as attempts to "conquer" the other "world" in order to prove our own competence and merit (16). With a disposition of self-centeredness, attempts to enter into others' "worlds" may be arrogantly motivated by the ego. They might be motivated, for example, by a voyeuristic desire to participate in others' lives or cultures for the purposes of appearing "worldly", "cultured", or politically conscious, rather than from an earnest desire to get to know others in their full humanity and complexity.

The type of playfulness important for genuine “world”-traveling is different. It is collaborative rather than competitive. Unknowns are welcomed and opportunities to be surprised are treated as sources of joy. This sense of playfulness, embodied in loving perception, is a disposition that enables the epistemic humility needed to appreciate and cherish different ways of being, seeing, and knowing—to truly travel into other phenomenological constructions of the “world” which depart from the constructions we are accustomed to. “World”-traveling, in the loving and playful sense that Lugones’ describes, involves not merely observing or gawking at others, their customs, and environments but earnestly participating in other “worlds”. It involves letting the “world” unfold before us, with a sense of curiosity—resisting compulsions to project one’s own assumptions or narratives onto that “world” and those within it.

3.1.2: Whole-Hearted Political Solidarity

The concept of “world”-traveling is often taken up in the feminist philosophical literature as a valuable practice for privileged allies to come to better understand the experience of those who are marginalized. This is important for allies who aim to join in political solidarity with those oppressed in ways that they are not. Before discussing the connection between “world”-traveling and political solidarity, I will first describe political solidarity more generally, highlighting the importance of solidarity for movements towards justice. I then draw from these accounts of political solidarity in order to develop an account of what I refer to as a ‘whole-hearted political solidarity’.

First, let’s consider Iris Marion Young’s discussion of shared responsibility for structural injustice, which is helpful for emphasizing the importance of solidarity for political justice-seeking movements (Young 2011). In virtue of the deeply interdependent globalized world in which we are embedded, we are implicated in contributing to many social and institutional processes that produce unjust outcomes—regardless of whether we intend to contribute to these processes or not. Our participation in these processes, on Young’s account, generates a forward-looking responsibility or moral obligation to work towards changing and transforming unjust social-structural conditions in order to make their outcomes less unjust (Young 2011, 96). But, because the causes of structural injustice are fundamentally collective in nature, we cannot effectively transform the deep roots of

structural injustice without working together. In Young's words, "[n]o one of us can do this on our own" (111). Thus, taking up responsibility for structural injustice (by working towards building a more just world) involves not only critically reflecting on our own actions and correcting course as needed, but also organizing together in collective action with others. The concept of "solidarity", Young suggests, describes the type of relationship between those who "recognize and take up a shared responsibility in relation to" the social-structural processes in which they participate and who organize together in order to make those institutions and practices more just (121).

With this basic understanding of why solidarity is important for movements towards justice in mind, I will briefly survey the accounts of solidarity that I take up and draw from in my account of 'whole-hearted political solidarity'. I turn, first, to Meena Krishnamurthy's account of political solidarity, according to which solidarity is a deeply *relational* concept—one that is defined, not only by sharing a cognitive or theoretical commitment to a political goal, but by particular ways of regarding or standing in relation to one another (Krishnamurthy 2013). More specifically, Krishnamurthy argues that political solidarity is necessarily "characterized by the attitudes of […] mutual respect, mutual trust, loyalty and mutual support toward one another"[24] (129). Krishnamurthy's relational account finds itself in good company, alongside the work of Thomas Shelby and Myisha Cherry (Shelby 2002; Cherry 2020). Shelby (whom Cherry draws from in her account of "solidarity care") argues that a robust sense of group solidarity is characterized by group members identifying with one another and thus taking each other's interests as their own, sharing values and political goals, acting with loyalty and faithfulness to other members and to the group's shared values, and having mutual trust amongst each other (Shelby 2002, 237-239; Cherry 2020, 4).

Krishnamurthy argues that relational attitudes of this kind (i.e., respect, trust, loyalty, and mutual support) are integral to political solidarity for two reasons. First, these

[24] Krishnamurthy also includes "collective identification" in her list of necessary and sufficient conditions for political solidarity. The type of collective identification she is referring to is collective identification as members of a shared state, given that her focus in this paper is on the state's distributive of public healthcare resources. I am not particularly compelled by the idea that solidarity depends in some way on collective identification as members of a shared state. I think it would make more sense to say that solidarity involves collective identification on the basis of membership within the solidarity group. Nonetheless, I have left this point aside for my present purposes.

attitudes and the relationships they engender allow us to develop a firm commitment to justice and to build the skills needed to identify what justice requires. We come to learn about and better understand the situation at hand, and what needs to change, through working together with others. We are not born with these commitments or skills. Rather, we develop them through "mutually respectful, trusting, and supportive interactions" (Krishnamurthy, 133). Second, the relational attitudes that Krishnamurthy outlines motivate us "to engage in mutual cooperation and to make the kinds of sacrifices that are necessitated by justice" (138). Without motivation to work together, offer our time, energy, and labor, and make sacrifices for sake our shared political goals, our theoretical commitments to those goals will be ineffective. Trust is especially important here because, in Shelby's words "mutual trust is the foundation of cooperation" (Shelby 2002, 238).

These relational features of solidarity also highlight the important role of affective relationships or emotional bonds within solidaristic communities. In her discussion of the role of emotions in solidarity, Janet Jones writes that she "used to think that Jodi Dean was right: solidarity is borne of a common goal *or* an affective relationship". Now, Jones says, she is "not so sure that the line that separates them is all that distinct or there at all" (Jones 2020). In other words, the line between a shared goal or an affective bond as the basis of solidarity is blurry, because we cannot work together towards a goal without simultaneously building connections with one another. When we organize together, spending time in the world (or in a "world") together, we cannot help but get to know each other, not only as collaborators, but as people. Affect arises naturally through the very act of cultivating the relations of trust, mutual respect, and mutual support that are required for cooperating and working together effectively. Relationships amongst a collective of people who lack emotion-laden bonds with one another would be unlikely to meet the relational conditions outlined by Krishnamurthy as necessary for relationships of political solidarity. It seems to follow, then, that "solidarity" void of affective or emotional bonds could only be solidarity in only a very thin conception of the term—if at all.

However, bearing the important affective components of solidarity in mind, political scientist, María José Méndez, notes that some activists worry that the term "solidarity" has been "reduced to disembodied expressions of empathy" (Méndez 2023, 38). This is not to say that empathy is unimportant or unhelpful. Empathy is an important

human response to the experiences of other beings. Moreover, Méndez says, there are often important political reasons for making use of empathy—for example, in social justice campaigns and fundraisers, where empathy is invoked to draw moral attention the experiences of others (42). Nonetheless, Méndez argues, the rhetoric of empathy and expressions of "shared suffering" can also function to erase the differences that exist between those facing injustice and those who are beckoned to bear witness to those injustices (44). This is not *always* the case, but the type of empathy that Méndez challenges is "empathy as tourism, where the empathizer steps into another world, whether imaginatively or physically, only to step back quickly into a space of privilege" (41-42).

In response to this concern—that "solidarity" based in empathetic identification with some abstract "other" can be unhelpful and shallow, insofar as it can erase differences in identities and lived experiences—Méndez invokes the political term "*acuerpar*" which arises from movements of decolonial feminist resistance in Central America. Translating roughly to "giving one's body" (Méndez 2023, 38) the concept of *acuerpar* challenges us to think of solidarity not *only* as a feeling but as a necessarily embodied practice of collective care. It names, Méndez says, "the quotidian actions that bodies take to hold space for each other in the face of rampant gendered and racialized violence" (Méndez 2023, 38). It is an orientation to others that occurs "in the messy doing of care as opposed to the abstract feeling of care" (Méndez 2023, 52). In other words, it involves caring for each other *as people* as we work together towards our shared political goals. It is the practice of engaging in mutual aid *while* and *so that we can* continue doing the demanding work of organizing together to challenge social structures, institutional policies, and social practices that lead to injustice.

This might involve "cooking, cleaning, looking after children and the elderly, and providing emotional relief to others through music, dance, art, and spiritual offerings to the land" (Méndez 2023, 41). For sake of my present focus on digital technologies, I will add that practices of collective care can take other creative forms that engage our lived bodied, even without sharing the same literal/physical space is not possible or perhaps not presently called for. For example, "the messy doing of care" might also look like answering the phone late at night when a friend is crying from stress and exhaustion, holding space for another to vent over texts messages after a heated argument with a co-organizer, or even making

light-hearted jokes, sending memes, and laughing together in a group chat, as reprieve from the heaviness of engaging with immense structural problems and political turmoil.

Acuerpar, in the many diverse forms that such practices of collective care might take, challenges us to conceive of solidarity as an ongoing process, as a commitment to offering our bodies, selves, time, labor, and energy in practices of mutual aid—as a commitment to "hold space for the other while traveling side by side" (Méndez 2023, 58). Méndez' discussion of *acuerpar* asserts that solidarity involves the embodied practice of collective care, rather than disembodied expressions of empathy with some abstract other. This challenge to conventional invocations of empathetic identification with others is not at all to say that empathy and emotion play no role in the doing of solidarity and in our collective movements towards justice. However, *acuerpar* "brings into view practices of collective care that do not assume emotional commonality in advance". Rather, it is from and through those practices of collective care that emotional bonds emerge (Méndez 2023, 51).

So far, following Krishnamurthy, Shelby, Cherry, and Méndez, I have suggested that we should understand solidarity as involving particular relational and affective attitudes, and as involving an embodied *doing* (rather than say, a mere feeling or a commitment in theory but not action). Before proceeding further, I return, first, to Young's brief discussion of solidarity[25]. In line with Méndez' concerns about erasure of differences, Young makes clear that although solidarity is sometimes conflated with concepts like unity (which can function to erase differences or obscure asymmetrical experiences), "solidarity need not connote homogeneity or symmetry among those in relation". It is a relationship, she says, "among separate and dissimilar actors who decide to stand together" (120)[26]. Moreover, for Young, sharing responsibility and being in solidarity with others in resistance

[25] Young's brief section on solidarity is a relatively rough sketch on the topic, given that *Responsibility for Justice* was published posthumously after Young's unfortunately early death.

[26] See, also, Amy Allen in *The Power of Feminist Theory: Domination, Resistance, Solidarity*. Here, Allen conceptualizes solidarity "as the ability of a collectivity to act together for the agreed-upon end of challenging, subverting, and, ultimately, overturning a system of domination" (Allen 1999, 127). Understood this way, solidarity avoids the charge that it is a potentially exclusionary concept, if predicated on an inherent "sameness" amongst individuals (Allen 1999, 123). Rather, Allen argues that solidarity for feminist aims ought to be understood as a form of exercising "power-with" others towards the goal of collective empowerment (Allen 1999, 126).

to structural injustice involves looking towards the future. It entails an active and hopeful commitment to bringing about a more just future. More specifically, a reading of Young's discussion of solidarity tells us that, while understanding that social structures of the past play a powerful role in shaping the structures we encounter now, those in solidarity do not see those past structures as *determining* what and how those structures *could* be as we move forward into an ever-changing present. In making this point, Young draws on Jacques Derrida's notion of the "perhaps" (Young 2011, 118; Derrida 1997) She says, "[r]ather than tak[ing] existing social structures and relations as they are, [or] as given", solidarity requires that we treat existing structures as sites of *possibility*—as possibilities that "*perhaps* things can be improved" (Young 2011, 120).

In addition to the conditions of solidarity of outlined in these accounts, I put forward another condition or disposition that I believe is required for being in a robust relation of political solidarity with others, that I have not seen articulated in any account of political solidarity in analytic philosophy. I am inspired by Young's claim that being in solidarity requires that we remain committed to the possibility that *perhaps* things can be changed. However, accepting the possibility that structures can be changed is not the end of the story. We must then ask: *How* we should change them? How should they be transformed and what should they be changed to? Afterall, effective political action does not just require knowledge of what we are *against* but also what we are *in favor of.* Critiquing unjust systems and social structures is an important part of political action but, I believe, to make tangible progress in the world we must also develop some idea of what system or structure we think should replace those that we critique or wish to abolish. Thus, because being in solidarity entails working together to transform deeply embedded social structures, I contend that collaborating with others in political solidarity requires creativity and innovation. It requires that we imagine what other social arrangements might be possible and that we think creatively about how we might work together to bring about these alternative possibilities. Moreover, because this will often entail trying political tactics or approaches that may not have been tried before (insofar as they depart from the structures we have before us), the *doing* of solidarity *in praxis* requires courage. It requires the courage to try novel approaches for addressing dynamic social problems and for navigating political disagreements with others (both collaborators and adversaries). Additionally, we

will inevitably fall short in some of our attempted political approaches. Sustained political solidarity requires the courage and perseverance to take unsuccessful attempts at transforming structures, not as failures or reason to quit, but as insights from which we can draw in order to move forward in creative ways and try again.

The relational, affective, and embodied features of solidarity I outlined above are important here because doing this kind of creative deliberation and puzzling together about how to change deeply rooted conditions of injustice, and doing the advocacy work required to bring about that social change, is demanding work. It is time-consuming and, often, vulnerable, especially for the marginalized. This type of work and commitment of our time and energy can hardly be sustained if we do not have trusting relationships that motivate, inspire, and support us to keep trying. Thus, following a lineage of thinkers on solidarity and bringing their accounts together (Young 2011; Krishnamurthy 2018; Shelby 2002; Cherry 2020; Jones 2020; Méndez 2023), I suggest that we define 'whole-hearted political solidarity' as the following: trusting and affect-laden relationships between those who believe that unjust structures can and should be changed and as involving a commitment to work towards this goal with others in creative ways, while engaging in practices of collective care and mutual aid as we do that political work together.

While I suggest that we define 'whole-hearted political solidarity' in this way, it should be noted that solidarity (much like other relationships or relational attitudes) certainly admits of degrees. The account of solidarity that I have put forward above, is solidarity in one of its most robust forms. This is not to say, however, that other forms of solidarity are unimportant or not worth engaging in. We are finite beings with limited time, energy, capacities, abilities, and resources. We simply cannot be everywhere at once, participate in every important social justice movement at once or with the same degree of engagement. Given our material and energetic finitude, it is not possible to cultivate the most robust form of relational political solidarity with those involved in each worthwhile political movement, despite the fact that we are implicated in a great many injustices. I suggest that we can take a practical approach to this limitation. My remarks on this are two-fold.

First, we should take note of the fact that most forms of injustice are deeply interconnected with other forms of injustice. When we step back and see the connections

between the many varieties of structural injustice, we see that many of them result from the same or from deeply intertwined social structures, institutions, and systems. Bearing this in mind, we can then recognize that many forms of activism—against particular varieties of injustice—are part of a larger collective struggle towards justice, one that is comprised of many activists engaged in diverse types of collective action. For example, engaging in activism against colonialism also, by nature of the intertwinement of these forms of injustice, challenges capitalist exploitation and environmental destruction[27]. While we cannot be everywhere at once—at every protest for every important cause—we can be pragmatic about where we focus our energy, appreciating that transforming deeply interconnected conditions of injustice requires the work of many collectives of individuals engaging in a broad range of political tactics.

Second, as briefly mentioned above, political solidarity (like the relational attitudes involved in solidarity) admits of degrees. While I have defined a particularly robust form of political solidarity, we should note that solidarity need not always take its most robust form in order to have a tangible and positive impact on our world. In cases where it is not within our means to cultivate the most robust form of political solidarity with a worthwhile cause—because of our finitude as human beings—we can focus on fulfilling the relational conditions of political solidarity (like mutual trust, mutual respect, loyalty and support) *enough* to meet a *threshold* for solidarity that can function. We don't, after all, need to trust everyone completely in order to work together. I might not trust a fellow political activist enough to give them my housekeys, but trust in every domain is not necessary for working together in an effective way. In some cases, we simply need to trust others enough to move forward in working together as a group, trusting that they have the shared goals of the group in mind and can be trusted to work towards those goals in a reasonable way.

Keeping practicality in mind, it should also be noted that the relational attitudes and affective bonds involved in political solidarity are challenging to measure or quantify. As I have suggested, we should think of the conditions of solidarity as *thresholds* rather than, say, clearly demarcated checkboxes. This is not to say that those conditions are wholly subjective but, rather, to say that they are qualitative in nature. They are conditions we should aim to foster and nourish in an ongoing way—using our discernment to honestly

[27] See Whyte (2017) for a discussion of the connection between colonialism and climate injustice.

assess whether we are sufficiently meeting the thresholds for genuinely being in solidarity with others, so that we can enact tangible change in our remarkably unjust world.

3.1.3: "World"-Traveling as a Solidarity-Building Practice

Recall that my broader aim in this paper is to explore the role that social media platforms, digital technologies, and the algorithms at work on those platforms play in shaping relations of political solidarity. Towards this goal, I have set out to consider what "world"-traveling might look like when taken up in our contemporary context, where many of our connections to one another are mediated by digital technologies. Recall, also, that the concept of "world"-traveling is often understood as a valuable practice for building solidarity across differences in identity and lived experience. The connection between "world"-traveling and solidarity has, however, not been made very explicit in the literature on these two concepts. Understanding the connection between "world"-traveling and solidarity will demonstrate why it is politically important that we consider potential barriers and challenges to "world"-traveling in the "digital age".

In this sub-section, I aim to make clearer how "world"-traveling can contribute to solidarity-building efforts for resisting injustice. I spell out how "world"-traveling does so, in part, by revealing our differences and helping us to affirm the plurality within our communities. This allows us to recognize privilege and to critically reflect on unjust power dynamics that can undermine relations of solidarity. I then put forward the claim that "world"-traveling contributes to solidarity-building efforts by revealing new possibilities, new ways our structuring the institutions, practices, and norms that make up our daily lives. Witnessing constructions of the "world" that diverge from dominant constructions helps remind us of and remain committed to the fact that unjust social structures are not unchangeable facts about the universe. The structures that be *can*, in fact, be changed. Our "worlds" can be constructed in new and different ways, if we are willing to do the work of revealing and working towards new possibilities. Recognizing this fact enables us to foster the hopeful, creative, and courageous dispositions needed for participating in forward-looking political solidarity.

In her blog post on "visiting other worlds", Katy Fulfer says that "world"-traveling enables us to take notice of how we and others are positioned in various "worlds".

Inhabiting different worlds may shift our sense of self because we are "interacting differently with the norms and expectations of that world" (Fulfer 2020). Consider, for a moment, what it feels like to walk into a party with your closest friends, at a bar you have been to many times. Throughout the night, you sing along to the music playing. You know the words to nearly all of the songs and what melodies are coming next. You approach the bar counter and know which drinks they serve, what specials they have, and who to talk to. You feel pretty confident in anticipating which jokes are appropriate, and are familiar with the shows, movies, and artists that others are talking about. In this space, you understand yourself in a certain way—though you are likely not thinking about it very directly. You do not need to hold a very conscious meta-awareness about your sense of self because being in a "world" familiar to you feels like second nature. When we enter "worlds" that are new to us—such as accompanying a friend to a party in a completely different socio-economic community, moving to a new region, starting a new job, or visiting a place where a different language is spoken—we may suddenly feel more conscious of ourselves than we do in more familiar spaces. We may be much less sure of how we are seen in a context where we do not "know all the moves" (Lugones 1987, 12). This consciousness of the self need not be understood as anxious or embarrassed self-consciousness (though it may be in some cases), but as a stark awareness of one's sense of self and place within a "world". Less familiar surroundings can prompt a meta-awareness about how we are situated within that "world", and this allows us to see more clearly how our own social positions and experiences differ from the positions and experiences of others (Fulfer 2020).

Recall that solidarity ought not to be understood as homogeneity and sameness amongst fellows (Young 2011, 120). Rather, solidarity involves a "commitment to the plurality of our communities" (Fulfer 2020). By providing a clearer view of the differences that exist between us, "world"-traveling affirms our commitment to and appreciation of this plurality. Recognizing and affirming our plurality is important for solidarity building because it keeps us from attempting to assimilate others' experiences into our own, which erases and ignores the diverse experiences of others. Welcoming difference within our solidarity groups allows us to better listen to the experiences and needs of others which depart from our own.

Revealing and affirming our plurality also helps us to recognize privilege (Fulfer 2020). Janet Jones and Katy Fulfer's paper on "solidaristic listening" highlights the importance of recognizing privilege, and the power imbalances that come along with privilege, when working to build solidarity with others (Jones and Fulfer 2024). While Jones and Fulfer do not focus centrally on "world"-traveling, they invoke the concept in their argument that "[s]torytelling has the potential to reveal injustices, spark collective political action, and build solidarity" (1). Storytelling, they argue, can foster and support the agency of the marginalized, when their stories are truly *heard* and listened to. This is important for solidarity because we cannot work to uplift those in our communities if we do not first listen to what they experience and what they need. The authors show, however, that the solidaristic potential of storytelling can be undermined by unjust power dynamics between community members (4). Thus, we need to recognize and reflect critically on privilege and power imbalances in order to protect the "liberatory potential of storytelling" for building communities of solidarity (8).

"World"-traveling can help us to do this. Engaging in "world"-traveling, in the loving way that Lugones' recommends, requires an openness to understanding ourselves as constructed differently in others' "worlds". Relaxing our stubborn committed-ness to our own ways of seeing the world and our places in it, and approaching differences with the epistemic humility involved in Lugones' sense of playfulness, enables us to recognize privilege which may be forgotten or ignored in other contexts. For those who experience many layers of privilege, circumstances may not compel them to "world"-travel very often. When one most often inhabits dominant constructions of the "world" from the position of a privileged identity, that identity and the accompanying privileges are easily taken for granted. In other words, privilege is easily made invisible to those who have it (McIntosh 1989), thus inhibiting us from recognizing when we might lack genuine understanding of stories told by those in other social positions. The purpose of acknowledging privilege is not to shame, but to bring light to the gaps in knowledge that it can create. For example, failing to recognize privilege can obscure the fact that our own narratives "may be informed by racism, ableism, heteronormativity, […] settler-colonialism" or other dominant ideologies (Jones and Fulfer 2024, 6). The dispositions of loving perception and playfulness in "world"-traveling enable us to see ourselves as constructed from others'

perspectives so that we can begin to unpack how privilege might obstruct our understanding of and appreciation for others' experiences and testimonies. Learning to listen and understand more deeply can help us become more genuinely supportive members of the solidaristic communities we are part of.

There is an additional way that "world"-traveling contributes to solidarity that I have not seen articulated elsewhere, and which builds on my previous discussion that solidarity requires a commitment to the notion of the "*perhaps*" and a disposition of creativity. Consider how it is not *only* that being in one "world" *feels* different than being in another "world", but "the norms of each world shape [our] opportunities" or affordances differently (Fulfer 2020). Different possibilities are brought to life in different "worlds". For example, different possibilities arise in queer "worlds" compared to heterosexual "worlds", such as possibilities about what relationships and families can look like. I remember watching a TV show (the name of which I cannot recall) where one character told another that they are polyamorous, which refers to the consensual and trusting practice of having sexual or romantic relationships with more than one person. The other responded with something like, "Wow, I didn't even know that was an option!". Monogamy, as the only possible relationship structure, was something they had simply not questioned. Consider also the rigid ways in which the concept of "family" is constructed in white, heterosexual, middle/upper-middle class "worlds". Family, in these "worlds", is typically understood as a biological nuclear family unit—but "families" in queer "worlds" need not be composed of individuals linked through biological lineage, marriage, or dyadic romantic love. Rather, "chosen families" or "found families" (terms more commonly used in queer communities) are more akin to kinship networks of mutual support. Non-conventional family structures are common in queer communities where many individuals have been mistreated, rejected, or disowned by their biological families. By compelling us to develop new frameworks for building community and finding support, the marginalization of queerness reveals new possibilities, new ways of constructing our "worlds". Thus, traveling into "queer" worlds, regardless of whether one is queer themselves, can bring to light the fact that different ways of structuring relationships and family are, in fact, possible.

Now, recall that Iris Marion Young argues that solidarity must look forward—not taking social structures as they are but, also, as what they could be. By revealing possibilities that depart from dominant ways of moving through the world, "world"-traveling can help us to engage in the deliberative innovation needed to challenge deeply rooted conditions of injustice. It can encourage in us a disposition to be in the world creatively and allows us to maintain hope of the "perhaps". In other words, "world"-traveling can keep us committed to the fact that things can be different—that institutions, norms, and social structures can be constructed in more liberatory and compassionate ways. Remaining hopeful of the possibility of that unjust structures can be changed and acting in alignment with this belief is, I argue alongside Young, necessary for any meaningful sense of political solidarity, and traveling to other "worlds" is a powerful way of giving this hope alive.

3.2: Cautions and Challenges for "World"-Traveling and Solidarity Building in the Digital Age

So far, I have provided a description of the practice of lovingly and playfully traveling to differently constructed phenomenological "worlds". I have also drawn from several theorists to argue that we should understand 'whole-hearted political solidarity' to entail the cultivation of trusting and affect-laden relationships between those who believe that unjust structures can and should be changed and as involving a commitment to work towards this goal with others in creative ways, while engaging in practices of collective care and mutual aid. Then, I further articulated how the practice of phenomenological "world"-traveling can help us to cultivate and maintain political solidarity across differences in identity by 1. revealing and affirming the plurality within solidaristic communities, 2. helping us to recognize privilege and unjust power dynamics, and 3. uncovering new possibilities that we can work towards through collective action. Now that we have a clearer picture of these concepts and how they work together, we are well-situated to explore the motivating question in this paper: What might "world"-traveling as a solidarity-practice look like when taken up in our contemporary context—in a context where many of our interactions are mediated by social media and digital technologies?

In this section, I will discuss potential challenges and barriers to politically productive "world"-traveling through digitally mediated communication on social media platforms. I begin by discussing the homogenizing effect that algorithms have on the content that we see and two consequences of this for solidarity building. I explain, first, how algorithms' homogenizing effect functions to reproduce dominant perspectives, narratives, and biases, thus reinforcing social stereotypes. I then explain how this homogenizing effect can cause an overinflation in privileged persons' confidence in their familiarity with or knowledge about marginalized communities they aim to support. Namely, I argue that algorithms can result in an overly narrow representation of particular communities, erasing the deep diversity *within* a community. By breeding gaps in knowledge, this can lead privileged allies to engage in what feminist philosopher, Mariana Ortega, calls "loving, knowing ignorance" which, despite the name, is not really loving or knowledgeable. Discussing this concept, specifically, as it applies to white academic feminists' knowledge claims about women of color, Ortega describes "loving, knowing ignorance" as "an ignorance [about] the thought and experience of women of color that is accompanied by [proclamations of] both alleged love for and alleged knowledge about them" (Ortega 2006, 57). I then relate the concept of "world"-traveling to "performative allyship" and discuss its impact on solidarity movements. Additionally, I use Ortega's critiques of "loving, knowing ignorance" to explain how algorithms on social media can encourage "arrogant perception" and contribute to the problem of "performative allyship".

3.2.1: Homogenization, Stereotypes, and Algorithms on Social Media

Exploring how digital technologies, such as social media and the algorithms at work on these platforms impact the practice of "world"-traveling and efforts to build solidarity is important because these technologies are now ubiquitous in our modern lives. Social interactions frequently mediated by social media platforms include those that are relevant to our friendships, professional relations, and our political activities. On social media, we might discuss current events with our friends and mutual followers, repost articles and info-graphs, and share links to books, artists, or brands we support. We use social media to follow politicians and to stay up to date and in the loop about social movements, local

protests, and rallies. We see businesses and large institutions post "statements of solidarity" about political movements or marginalized communities, and we might also witness public "call outs" of individuals or businesses. Likewise, social media and other services that use algorithms to determine the content we see now serve as many individuals' primary resources for accessing the news (Pew Research Center 2023). With all of this in mind, it is clear that algorithms now play a significant role in determining what information we encounter and who we are prompted to interact with.

It is not necessary for the purposes at hand to have a sophisticated technical understanding of how algorithms function online. But, in short, when discussing algorithms, we are most often referring to pattern-finding algorithms (Pariser 2011, 130-131). These algorithms are designed to identify patterns in the type of content that we engage with—to identify what kinds of posts a person tends to "like", comment on, and share—so that the system can provide similar content in order to *keep* us engaged on that platform (and keep exposing us to paid advertisements, which are social media companies' real bread and butter). While targeted advertisements may be seen as a nuisance or a dystopian reminder of surveillance to some (Coonrod 2021), many regular users find highly curated feeds that tailor content to our individuals' interests to be desirable (Smith 2018). Rather than sifting through countless pages of potentially irrelevant content, algorithms present users with content that they, specifically, are most likely to find interesting, relevant, or familiar (Pariser 2011).

While this feature might make social media more captivating, it does not mean that the curated content provided by algorithms is reliable, thorough, objective, or unbiased. In order to keep people engaged on social media sites, algorithms are most likely to present users with posts they are likely to "like" or engage with. This means that they tend to prioritize content that affirms the beliefs we already hold. Put another way, algorithms can contribute to "confirmation bias" (Emery 2020) because repeated and ongoing exposure to information that confirms our own perspectives strengthens their epistemic force in our minds (Pariser 2011). This can lead users into online "filter bubbles" or "echo chambers", which are digital spaces that exclude or encourage distrust of opposing views (Pariser 2011; Nguyen 2020). Moreover, by prioritizing content with "high engagement rates", the opposing viewpoints that we *do* encounter are likely to be polarizing, controversial,

sensational, or inflammatory (AIContentfy 2023) and, thus, unconducive to reasonable political dialogue in the face of disagreements.

Moreover, algorithms do not only mirror our *own* beliefs back to us but, because they are also trained on wider patterns of generalized user behavior, they also reproduce biases found in the broader dominant culture. In her book 2018, *Algorithms of Oppression*, Safiya Umoja Noble examines how algorithms in Google's search engines reinforce oppressive stereotypes about women of color. What Noble found was that Google searches for terms like "Black girls" resulted in sexually explicit webpages while an image search for the term "doctor" resulted in photos of, almost exclusively, white men. Since the publication of Noble's work, Google has adjusted their algorithms to avoid producing search results that depict such blatant stereotypes. While this technical fix is a step in the right direction, the underlying issue persists. Search engine algorithms still function by generating search results based on patterns of correlation and of user activity, in ways that inevitably reflect and reproduce norms, narratives, and patterns found in society at large. Thus, algorithms continue to function in ways that can reinforce consciously or unconsciously held social stereotypes—reflecting narratives from the dominant culture and historical patterns of inequality back to users (even if more subtly and, perhaps, insidiously).

Pariser writes that algorithms' effectiveness at pattern-finding and pattern-producing can easily result in "overfitting" or an overestimation in the stability of a particular pattern. According to Pariser, overfitting and stereotyping are essentially synonyms. Both are overgeneralizations that are resistant to counterevidence, because evidence to the contrary is taken to be statistical "noise" or outliers to the pattern, and is then disregarded as irrelevant or as exceptions to the rule rather than as counterevidence (Pariser 2011, 131; Blum 2004, 261). When patterns identified by algorithms are representative of histories of oppression and unjust hierarchies in social power, algorithmic pattern recognition and reproduction further entrenches these same conditions of injustice.

In *The People's Platform,* Astra Taylor says that "[w]hile the Internet offers marginalized groups powerful and potentially world-changing opportunities to meet and act together, new technologies also magnify inequality, reinforcing elements of the old order. Networks do not eradicate power: they distribute it in different ways, shuffling

hierarchies and producing new mechanisms of exclusion" (Taylor 2014, 108). The homogenizing effect of algorithms on social media is one of these new mechanisms of exclusion. It is difficult to remedy even when one puts in concerted effort to maintain an "inclusive" feed on social media. During the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, many social media users were advised to "diversify their feeds". While this suggestion is a good one that users ought to listen to, truly familiarizing oneself with a diversity of experiences and perspectives is not as simple as following a few more accounts run by Black individuals, people of color, or those with other marginalized identities.

Algorithms' function of boosting content that aligns with the dominant social values of the culture plays a role in determining which intersections of marginalized persons are given uptake on social media. What this means is that many white people may have diversified their feeds, but perhaps only with accounts run by people of color that still fit congruently within their own construction of the world. Likewise, imagine a man who diversified his feed to include more women. But, because algorithms learn what is most relevant to users by detecting patterns in engagement, his search for more "diverse" user profiles results in outputs that represent his own biases and the biases of the broader culture. He may not realize that the profiles he followed still fit within a dominant perspective of what modern women should be like or, perhaps, what 'strong women' should be like—such as a successful businesswoman whose claim to fame is that she is still able to make time for her husband and children while running her business. The women-run accounts he followed might be those of women who are nonetheless conventionally feminine, white, fit, straight, and moneyed—a representation that is unchallenging to the dominant systems of heteronormativity and white supremacy. In short, we should be wary that even when our feeds appear diverse, algorithms may be providing us with images of others that still fit congruently within our own system of beliefs and the dominant culture at large. This might allow us to feel better about the inclusivity of our feeds and content, all the while leaving some of our internal biases and unconsciously held stereotypes unchallenged.

Let's consider another example. Imagine a white man—let's call him Frank—whose friend sent him an article about the treatment of Indigenous children at Canadian residential schools. He then realizes that he doesn't know much about Canada's history of colonization and, moreover, is not very familiar with the challenges that Indigenous people

face in Canada today. He "likes" the article and shares it to his Instagram "story". Instagram's algorithms take in this new piece of data and then suggest a video made by an Indigenous educator on Instagram. This educator is also a man, is conventionally attractive, and is quite macho—we'll call him Dan. Although Dan is Indigenous and Frank is white, there are parts of Dan's identity that resonate with Frank. He looks up to Dan's assertive and sure-footed masculinity. Frank enjoys Dan's content and is learning a lot, so he often "likes" and reposts Dan's videos to his own Instagram story. Instagram's algorithms recognize that Frank engages with this content, so the algorithmic system at work provides suggestions for similar Indigenous "content creators".

The fact that social media's algorithms have, in this case, led Frank to learn more about Indigenous people, traditions, experiences, and political perspectives, is a good thing. It is opportunities for learning about different perspectives, such as this, that initially led me to consider whether social media can enable opportunities for "world"-traveling. It is reasonable to think that Frank's active effort to learn more about Indigenous perspectives, especially if this effort results in actual relationships and connections with others, could potentially cultivate in him the openness and epistemic humility needed to travel into other phenomenological "worlds".

However, as might be clear from the discussion above, the homogenizing effect of algorithms presents a challenge. By presenting relatively narrow representations of marginalized communities and reinforcing social stereotypes, algorithms can make it more challenging to see others through the "loving perception" needed for "world"-traveling. We cannot truly appreciate others in all of their uniqueness and materiality, if our perception of them is clouded by stereotypes. We can consider here Lugones' discussion of *arrogant* attempts to travel to others' "worlds"; to enter their "worlds" and continue to construct it through one's own perception. This, Lugones says, can be a form of "traveling" rooted in cultural imperialism, through which one continues to impose agonistic constructions of others from "inside" their own world (Lugones 1987, 15). Entering others' "worlds" arrogantly means, in essence, to continue seeing what one wants to see and is no true form of "world"-traveling. As I continue to explain in the following sub-section, algorithms contribute to the problem of "arrogant perception", thus inhibiting the practice of "world"-traveling.

3.2.2: "Loving, Knowing Ignorance" and Performative Allyship

I argued, above, that algorithms can reproduce social biases and stereotypes, thus obscuring the plurality within communities and obstructing genuine "world"-traveling. In this sub-section, I elaborate further on the issue discussed above. Namely, I argue that the homogenizing effect of algorithms can further solidify our biases; thus, encouraging arrogant perception. Recall that arrogant perception is characterized by attempts to impose one's own narratives onto others' "worlds", by organizing meaning in those "worlds" according to one's own interests and perspectives (Frye 1983; Lugones 1987; Ortega 2006). I worry that access to other communities online may instill in privileged individuals an unjustified confidence in their own familiarity with and understanding of non-dominant perspectives when in reality their knowledge "may be inaccurate or may inadequately represent the experience" of those who are marginalized (Ortega 2006, 61). Mariana Ortega warns us of the dangers of attempting to "world"-travel for one's own ego, gain, or to arrogantly assert one's status as an "ally" to marginalized communities. She develops the concept of "loving, knowing ignorance" to describe the actions of those who produce ignorance about those who are oppressed in ways that they themselves not, while at the same time proclaiming "to have both knowledge about and loving perception toward them" (Ortega 2006, 1). Though Ortega's critique is directed primarily at white academic feminists, I believe that her framework can help us to understand how arrogant perception serves as a barrier to genuine political solidarity more broadly. This problem, I argue, is made worse by the homogenizing effect of algorithms on social media.

Recall that because algorithms aim to provide us with content that resonates with our interests, they create increasingly tailored feeds that reproduce the patterns already found in our online activity. Returning to the example of Frank, consider how the creators and educators suggested by Instagram's algorithms are, in virtue of Frank's interest in Dan's content, more likely to *also* be straight men who have similar experiences and perspectives relative to Dan. Frank unconsciously begins to believe that the "Indigenous perspective" and "Indigenous experience" is sufficiently represented those that Dan describes. Thus, while Frank is seeing an incomplete representation of Indigenous perspectives (out of a large and diverse community of many Indigenous cultures), he begins

to feel that he has a fairly thorough grasp of Indigenous people's concerns and what solutions they suggest in response to these concerns.

Thus, Frank begins to have an overinflated confidence in his familiarity with the experiences of Indigenous people in general. It may turn out that he is particularly unfamiliar with the experiences and challenges faced by Indigenous women and Two-Spirit Indigenous people, for example. Nonetheless, Frank might be motivated to begin speaking out more frequently in support of Indigenous causes and about decolonization. Talking more frequently about these problems is very likely, on the whole, a positive thing! However, Frank's gaps in knowledge may make it the case that his well-intentioned posts about Indigenous movements contribute to further ignorance about Indigenous perspectives if he fails to recognize that these gaps in his knowledge exist.

Additionally, Frank may notice that his posts about decolonization and reconciliation attract a noticeable amount of online engagement. He might notice that he is receiving encouragement and praise for his efforts to support Indigenous causes. Social affirmation and expressions of shared values play an important role in maintaining momentum in political movements. Nonetheless, social accolades can also feed into our fallible human egos. If we are not careful to keep our egos and arrogance in check, it is easy to be drawn towards less admirable motivations. It may gradually become less clear to Frank whether he is making a particular post because he believes his followers will benefit from exposure to information they may not have seen or if, on the other hand, he is doing so because it contributes to his reputation as an "ally" who is "on the right side of history". Proclamations of allyship displayed in order to demonstrate one's own moral virtue, accompanied by a lack of ongoing action, are frequently described as "performative allyship" (Kutlaca and Radke 2022).

The dangers of loving, knowing ignorance and performative allyship are not exclusive to social media, nor are algorithms the only or even the central cause of these phenomena. However, because algorithms can lead to confirmation bias and, thus, contribute to arrogant perception, they are likely to intensify or encourage these kinds of pitfalls in persons who are disposed toward them. Kutlaca and Radke define performative allyship as "easy and costless actions that often do not challenge the status quo and are motivated primarily by the desire to accrue personal benefits" (Kutlaca and Radke 2022).

Posting a proclamation of solidarity online, without doing the active, ongoing, and relational care work involved in political solidarity, is a paradigmatic example of an easy and costless action that constitutes performative allyship. This is damaging because it can cause disadvantaged groups to be (rightfully) skeptical or distrustful of privileged "allies" (Kutlaca and Radke 2022, 7), thus undermining the mutual trust needed for genuine political solidarity. Additionally, Holiday Phillips writes that acts of performative allyship "[excuse] privileged people from making the personal sacrifices necessary, to touch the depth of the systemic issues it claims to address" (Phillips 2020). Regarding performative allyship broadly, after "checking a box", doing an easy action such as reposting something online, or reciting a generic land acknowledgement, "allies" may feel excused from taking further meaningful action. Thus, performative allyship can slow down the progress of a movement and its concrete impacts, all the while making it *appear* that there is more effort towards a political cause than ever[28]. A. Freya Thimsen argues that real allyship, as opposed to performative allyship[29], "cannot just be *said*; it must be *done*" (Thimsen 2022, 84)—much like Méndez who asserts that solidarity must be an embodied practice, one which involves "the messy doing of care" with and for each other (Méndez 2023, 51).

3.2.3: On Embodied Presence and the Limitations of Social Media

In this sub-section, I highlight one more challenge or limit to "world"-traveling and solidarity building in the digital age, further exploring why the idea that we can travel to others' "worlds" and build meaningfully solidarity online remains dubious. This is not to say it is not possible, but to caution that most social media engagements do not meet the thresholds of any fairly robust conception of political solidarity. In short, the simple point I aim to make here is that "world"-traveling and solidarity require much more of us than easy clicks of a button or passively witnessing others' experiences online.

[28] There is a risk worth highlighting in our discussions of performative allyship. If individuals worry that their posts, land acknowledgements, etc. might be interpreted as being performative, they might resign to doing nothing at all. A. Freya Thimsen says that critiques of performative allyship ought to be framed and understood "as demands rather than condemnations" (Thimsen 2022, 83). Rather than demanding silence, critiques of performative allyship "[demand] more action, more activism—more than social media posts and progressive advertising themes" (Thimsen 2022, 88).

[29] Thimsen uses the term "performative activism" rather than "performative allyship" (Thimsen 2022). I use "allyship" here for sake of consistency.

In Ortega's words, "world"-traveling "requires a tremendous commitment to practice" (Ortega 2006, 69). It requires that we use loving perception to come to better understand the experiences of those who are oppressed and marginalized is ways that oneself is not. But, in order to avoid "loving, knowing perception", we need to listen to a wide range of perspectives within the communities we aim to better understand. This means that we should not only listen to the loudest, mostly rapidly trending person with a platform but should expose ourselves to the perspectives of those even less likely to be heard in the buzz of the digital age, those who may not be familiar with the social justice vocabularies that we take for granted in Western academic circles, and those who share their testimonies without an interest in gaining followers, likes, and retweets.

A reading of Ortega reminds us that, rather than the "seal that must be stamped" on one's online presence on social media in order to earn one's credentials as an ally, "world"-traveling,

> has to do with actual experience; it requires a tremendous commitment to practice: to actually engage in activities where one will experience what others experience; *to deal with flesh and blood people not just their theoretical constructions*; to learn people's language in order to understand them better not to use it against them; to really listen to people's interpretations however different they are from one's own; and to see people as worthy of respect rather than helpless beings that require help. […] My question […] is: What is "world"-traveling to you? Is it a nice theoretical notion or a way of life? Letters neatly printed on a page [or typed on a screen] or a path to more understanding and experiencing difference? (Ortega 2006, 69. *bracketed phrase and italics added*).

Thus, while social media can, most certainly, help us to learn about the perspectives of those who occupy different social positions and to meet a broader range of individuals than we might have encountered off-line (as I will discuss in section 3.3), the vast majority of online interactions are unlikely to amount to "world"-traveling. "World"-traveling requires, not just passively witnessing others' experiences or engaging with those experiences only briefly, but involves building real relationships with people—

relationships that are characterized by ongoing relational engagement and loving perception.

Similarly, while gaining a wider perspective about others' experiences, learning about political causes, and making posts online can serve as an important part of being and acting in solidarity, it is just that: a *part.* If we understand a robust sense of political solidarity as involving (as I suggest that we should) relational-affective attitudes like trust and mutual respect and as involving the *embodied doing* of mutual aid and collective care, then we see that solidarity *too* requires engaging with flesh and blood people. It is most certainly the case that *some* relationships that are primarily mediated by social media, are genuinely deep and meaningful relationships—comparable in their depth to engaging in-person or in "flesh and blood" (such as long-distance friendships when physical presence is not possible). Nonetheless, it is safe to say that the majority of online interactions do not have this depth.

Returning to Jones and Fulfer, their account of "solidaristic listening" emphasizes the importance of both physical presence and time spent together (Jones and Fulfer 2024, 12-14). Physical presence allows us to offer embodied cues to the person whose story we are listening to. Embodied cues can be used to signal to a speaker that we "respect them and care about their story" (Jones and Fulfer 2024, 13). In addition to physical presence, we need *time* to cultivate mutual trust with others. Jones and Fulfer draw from José Medina's metaphor of a "traveling partner", which implies the importance of time spent together while navigating the "world" at each other's sides. "Solidaristic listening", the authors say, "is about giving our time and attention to the storyteller(s), as a sign of our willingness to be changed by the narratives we may hear" (14). Physical presence, embodied cues, and time allow us to cultivate the relational attitudes necessary for building communities of genuine political solidarity. This is not to say that solidaristic listening is not possible without *literal* physical presence in the same space. Jones and Fulfer note that we can also offer our time and share space with others in an embodied way through other means, when presence in the same material space is not possible—for example, by reading testimonies and through video calls (a point I will return to in section 3.3). Nonetheless, the authors say, physical presence does add "a layer of complexity" (Bourgault 2016; cited

in Jones and Fulfer 2024, 13) to practices of solidaristic listening insofar as it enables us to offer and to read subtle cues of bodily comportment and engagement.

Recall, also, the discussion of *acuerpar* and embodied solidarity in section 3.1.2. A robust conception of solidarity requires working together with others in the world and engaging in embodied practices of mutual aid and collective care. It is most certainly not the case that online interactions can *never* reach the threshold of the embodied care involved in a robust conception of solidarity, as I will discuss below, but it is safe to say that *most* online interactions do not. Put more directly, the embodied elements of being in solidarity cannot be achieved through merely bearing witness to others' experiences online, changing one's Facebook banner to include a graphic expressing solidarity, or reposting an article about a "trending" political issue simply so you can be seen doing so.

When attempting to join in solidarity through our online actions, we should keep in mind the challenges raised by algorithms on social media; namely, that they can reinforce our biases and overinflate our confidence about our understanding of other communities' experiences, encourage arrogant perception, and thus worsen the problems of loving, knowing ignorance and performative allyship. We should also keep in mind the important relational, affective, and embodied elements of relational solidarity—the fact that solidarity involves building relationships and engaging with real people in the world. It involves collaborating with others to organize together in collective action for challenging and transforming unjust social structures, institutions, norms, and practices. While social media provides valuable opportunities for learning about and meeting others, we must not be so foolish as to assume that "world"-traveling, in the loving way that Lugones describes, can be accomplished by scrolling through TikToks or Reels—by passively consuming the experiences of others.

3.3: The Positive Potential of Social Media as a Tool for "World"-Traveling and Solidarity Building

I want to close by discussing some hopeful possibilities. I have argued that "world"-traveling and building relational political solidarity with the help of social media is not as simple as merely bearing witness to others' experiences online or reposting statements of "solidarity" on social media. Consuming small fragments of others' lives in a one-

directional manner might provide insights into other experiences, but it does not meet the relational demands of "world"-traveling or the demands of relational, embodied political solidarity. There are, as we have seen, additional risks raised by algorithms and the role they play in determining which posts we encounter on social media. However, this does not mean that social media has no place in helping us learn the skills involved in "world"-traveling and solidarity building. It also does not mean that online interactions *never* meet the thresholds of the relational, affective, embodied conditions of being in whole-hearted political solidarity with others.

I contend that social media can, at times, facilitate opportunities for traveling to others' "worlds", especially when there is already an established relationship between those interacting together online. While they might, on the surface, seem trivial, even interactions as simple as sending memes back and forth to one another can give us clues about how the other person experiences their "world" in an embodied way. If we already have a relationship with the person we are casually chatting or sharing memes with online, we have some sense about their embodied way of being in the world, which can help to inform our appreciation of why an image, meme, etc. resonated with them—further deepening our understanding of their "world". Moreover, small casual interactions, such as keeping in touch through social media, are often an important part of maintaining meaningful relationships in an ongoing way, which is, needed for traveling to others' "worlds".

On other hand, when individuals who are interacting on social media do *not* already have a pre-established relationship, such interactions (sharing of experiences, bearing witness, casual chat, etc.) are unlikely to meet the relational demands of "world"-traveling. Nonetheless, online interactions may serve as the sowing of seeds which lead to more sustained relationships. Social media does, undoubtedly, enable us to connect with socially or geographically distant others and provide opportunities for building friendships or collaborative relationships with those we may not have encountered offline. If approached with loving perception and the sense of playfulness[30] that Lugones describes, friendships

[30] After reading a draft of this paper for the Oct. 2023 *Southwestern Ontario Feminism and Philosophy* workshop, Katy Fulfer remarked (in her kind personal correspondence to me) that social media can also be used as a form of playfulness which, as we have seen, is an important disposition for traveling to others' "worlds".

or other mutually trusting relationships forged online can become fruitful sites for "world"-traveling across differences.

Turning now from discussion of "world"-traveling to discussion of political solidarity, let's return to Méndez' discussion of *acuerpar*. Méndez urges us to think of solidarity, not as a feeling or as an abstract expression of empathy, but as an embodied commitment to "the messy doing of care" for one another, as we work towards building a more just world together. It is certainly true that there are *types* of care that can only be done for each other when we are physically present together—such as watching the kids, cooking for one another, hugging each other while we cry, and so on. But it is most certainly *also* the case that we can engage in practices of collective care and mutual aid when we are not literally together in a shared physical space. As noted before, practices of collective care might take the form of emotional support for one another, offering our time and energy to give each other by talking on the phone, venting of social media, through text messages, and so on.

We can also show up for our fellows in an embodied way without physical presence by offering material support. Consider, for example, a friend who is exhausted from walking on the picket line all day during a labor strike. This friend texts you just to vent and mentions that they are hungry but frustrated that their fridge is empty and they do not have time to get groceries or prepare a healthy meal. Perhaps you are not able to offer to drive to their house and cook for them because you have your hands full with caretaking of your children and no one to look after them if you were to step away. A form of embodied care, however, might involve offering to order them a take-out meal or groceries to be delivered at their house. While you are not with this friend physically, you offer your own embodiment through your use of time, mental energy, and material resources, as way of helping to care for this friend's embodied needs. To offer one more example, you might have a friend who you often collaborate with in political activism despite living in different cities. With the rising costs of living, your friend is finding it increasingly challenging to afford their basic living expenses. While you might not be able to be there with this friend physically, due to geographical distance, you offer embodied care by offering to set up and run an online fundraiser (i.e., GoFundMe) for them—writing the blurb which explains their circumstances in a sensitive and tactful way, distributing the link to the fundraiser,

otherwise managing the fundraiser, and getting the funds to them so they can more easily meet their basic embodied needs.

In addition to being a potential medium for maintaining the relational-affective attitudes and embodied care involved in political solidarity, social media can also be used in ways that enable us to engage in the creative work of political solidarity by revealing new possibilities that we can work towards in our political activism. Social media, for all its perils, most certainly does help expose us to new ideas and information. If we use social media mindfully, intentionally seeking out information that departs from the perspectives we already hold, it can serve as a source of inspiration for the creativity needed for whole-hearted political solidarity. We might, for example, follow the accounts of other activists whom we can learn new political insights and approaches from. Social media can also provide us with reminders of the many injustices that exist in our world. This can, at times, be depressing and immobilizing (i.e. "doom-scrolling). But if we engage with social issues through social media in a mindful and balanced way, exposure to current events on social media can keep us motivated to stay engaged in courageous and creative forms of political activism.

In addition to using digital platforms for building and maintaining mutually trusting relationships, engaging in embodied care, and for inspiring the creativity involved in political activism, social media can also be an important logistical tool. Put simply social media can be productively used for mobilizing a broader scope of individuals and communicating empirical information relevant to organizing in collective action with others. Social media allows us to reach a broader audience and raise more awareness about particular instances of injustice than we would otherwise be able to. It can be used to help motivate a greater number of people to join together in resistance, thus increasing the collective power of a solidarity group. It is a powerful communication tool that allows us to share and access important logistical information, such as dates and locations of protests, the location of food and bathrooms at large protests and rallies, police activity, and/or live updates about what is unfolding. It can be used as a platform for learning about the books and resources we can read in order to further educate ourselves on the causes we aim to address. In fact, a central reason that #BlackoutTuesday, a paradigmatic example of performative allyship, was critiqued so heavily is because the empty black squares that

users were encouraged to post buried important logistical information about the Black Lives Matter protests that were taking place (Willingham 2020). Thus, it is clear that social media can be an important educational and logistical tool—a tool that can play a *part* in our efforts to organize in solidarity with others.

While many interactions on digital platforms and social media do not meet the thresholds for fulfilling the relational conditions of "world"-traveling and political solidarity, *some* interactions do! Even when online interactions do not meet those thresholds, they can provide opportunities for beginning meaningful relationships that might not have been forged otherwise. Moreover, the logistical role of social media, as a tool for collective organizing, is also a good place to start in our efforts to build political solidarity with others. By helping us to access information about local protests or organizations, social media can provide insight into where we can go to join together with others, which entails opportunities for beginning to cultivate relationships of political solidarity. Social media's function of keeping us in touch with one other, even in lighthearted ways, can facilitate and help maintain the kinds of trusting friendships that can serve as strong foundations for collective organizing. Thus, social media can be used as a tool or a starting point *towards* "world"-traveling and political solidarity. But both require, in the end, that we show up (emotionally or physically) in meaningfully ways and that we build real relationships with those we aim to "travel" alongside and be in solidarity with.

3.4. Conclusion

In this article, I have described Lugones' concept of "world"-traveling and offered an account of what I refer to as 'whole-hearted political solidarity'. On my account, this kind of solidarity entails the cultivation of trusting and affect-laden relationships between those who believe that unjust structures can and should be changed and as involving a commitment to work towards this goal with others in creative ways, while engaging in practices of collective care and mutual aid as we do that political work together. I also attempted to provide further clarification about how "world"-traveling functions as a solidarity-building practice: by revealing our plurality, helping us recognize privilege and unjust power dynamics, and by uncovering new possibilities. I then discussed the homogenizing effect of algorithms on social media which can reinforce stereotypes and

obscure the deep diversity within communities. By confirming the beliefs and biases we already hold, algorithms on social media can encourage arrogant perception—thus, leading privileged allies to engage in "loving, knowing ignorance" or, relatedly, "performative allyship". I then discussed the embodied nature of political solidarity, which is not made possible through cursory online interactions alone. I then highlighted how solidarity, in its deeply relational sense, is a demanding process that requires commitments of time and physical presence. I closed by discussing some positive potential, some of the ways that we might use social media for facilitating opportunities for "world"-traveling, solidarity building, and collective action. I hope that these discussions have helped to illuminate some of the unique challenges and barriers to "world"-traveling and building solidarity in the contemporary digital age. I hope that they have also emphasized the importance of "world"-traveling and solidarity building more generally.

My humble advice is this: take seriously Lugones' emphasis on the importance of playfulness which does not seek to dominate and loving perception which requires that we release our attachments to our epistemic authority. Remember that doing so helps us open ourselves up to truly hearing and appreciating narratives that may challenge or diverge from our own. Learn about and be mindful of how algorithms can reinforce stereotypes and dominant ideologies and can draw us into 'filter bubbles'. Remember, ultimately, that social media gives us a limited insight into the lives of people and communities. Talking frankly, remember to put your phone down sometimes. Slow down. Build real relationships with those around you and in your local communities. Travel to their "worlds". You can practice by traveling to the "worlds" of those who are already close to you—try to understand the "world" as constructed through their eyes. Even those we already know well have much to teach us if we look to them with loving perception. Learn to take care of each other in times of crisis and in times of joy. Remain committed to the possibility that *perhaps* or, dare I say, *most certainly*(!) things can be made better. But those possibilities will not just passively be presented to us, and social progress will not just happen *for* us. We have to put in the work—ourselves—offering our time and energy towards building supportive communities and spaces that can thrive. If you're unsure where to start, "find [the] organizations that appear to be making a difference, join them, and support them" (Bartky 2002, 148). Show up with a true heart. We cannot help but learn more about

ourselves and others in the process—uncovering liberatory possibilities as we move through all of our “worlds” together.

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Conclusion

VI. Summing Things Up

This project has been motivated by a deep sense of love for the world and an unwavering and unconditional sense of compassion for everyone *in* the world. I have invoked the framework of transformative justice, not only because of the helpful theoretical insights found in that framework, but also because the practice of transformative justice in founded on the idea that every person should be treated with humanity (even those who do wrong). I have taken up that lens in this project insofar as I have focused, not on ostracizing the everyday persons who are blameworthy for contributing to injustice but, rather, on better understanding how we can build relationships that enable us to learn how we can better align our actions with our values and work together in order to transform our world.

This project has aimed to build on Iris Marion Young's account of responsibility for structural injustice (2011). Young argues that we should not interpret our responsibility for structural injustice, primarily, as a form of backward-looking responsibility (i.e. guilt, liability, blameworthiness) but, rather, as a forward-looking responsibility for organizing in collective action with others in order to transform social-structural processes and make their outcomes less unjust. Although I depart from Young, insofar as I claim that *part* of our responsibility for justice should be understood as backward-looking guilt, I agree with her that our focus should be on making tangible change in the world by transforming the unjust social-structural processes that lead to injustice. I also take to heart Young's brief remarks which invoke the concept of solidarity in order to describe the kinds of relationships between those who work together towards this goal (121). Thus, this project has focused in large part on deepening our understanding of the nature of political solidarity and, moreover, on understanding the barriers to building solidarity and how we can overcome those barriers.

In Chapter, I engaged with Young's conceptual reasons against interpreting our responsibility for structural injustice as a form of complicity. I argued alongside others (Aragon and Jaggar 2018; Nussbaum 2009) that Young is mistaken and that our participation in social-structural processes that give rise to injustice does amount to complicity in that injustice. There is, however, a tension between our complicity in

structural injustice and relationships of solidarity that aim to remedy injustice. I also, in Chapter 1, began fleshing out an account of political solidarity (which I, then, develop more fully in Chapter 3). I described solidarity as involving a commitment to addressing an injustice in action, certain relational attitudes held towards one another (like mutual trust, respect, loyalty, and support), a commitment to the possibility that structures can, in fact, be changed, and as involving creativity and innovation in order to come up with novel solutions for addressing dynamic social problems. I then explored how it is that complicity can threaten or inhibit the fulfillment of these conditions by demonstrating a lack of commitment to action, reason to distrust those who are complicit in ongoing and unreflective ways, a lack of respect, loyalty, and support, and a lack of the creative disposition involved in solidarity. However, as noted in the introduction to this thesis, I found that a focus on complicity, on its own, provided little insight into how we can contribute to making the world better. Thus, rather than focusing on condemning those who are complicit, I contended that solidarity cannot realistically require that we end all complicity in structural injustice. I argued, however, that solidarity involves reckoning with complicity and I moved us towards an account of what reckoning with complicity in structural injustice involves. Reckoning with complicity should not be thought of as a "prerequisite" to joining in solidarity but, rather, something that we do and learn to do in an ongoing way, *through* the conversations and actions that we engage in while building solidarity and engaging in collective action with others.

Although I argued, in Chapter 1, that Young is mistaken in her claim that our contributions to structural injustice should not be considered a form of complicity in (i.e. shared blameworthiness for) structural injustice, I take seriously her practical concern that a focus on blame tends to produce defensiveness, thus inhibiting conversations that will result in the kind of collective action needed for addressing injustice. In Chapter 2, I argued that, if we are to consider our contributions to injustice a form of complicity, we see need to address this important practical concern that she highlights. Going beyond what Young said, I argue that one reason for the frequency of defensiveness in response to accusations of backward-looking responsibility (i.e. guilt, blameworthiness, complicity) is because we have culturally conflated backward-looking responsibility with punishment. This is to say, individuals are disincentivized from taking backward-looking responsibility because they

are afraid that this means they deserve or will receive some kind of social punishment (i.e. shame, penalty, or social exile). Restorative and transformative justice activists, however, have made clear that accountability (which includes both backward and forward-looking responsibility) need not be interpreted in a punitive sense. By bringing restorative and transformative justice literatures into direct conversation with Young's political philosophy, I have suggested that we can begin addressing the cultural problem of defensiveness caused by our internalization of the logic of punitive justice by supporting restorative and transformative justice as alternatives to the conventional framework of punitive justice.

In Chapter 3, I developed a fuller account of what a robust sense of political solidarity entails—referring to this as "whole-hearted political solidarity". I also took up María Lugones' concept of "world"-traveling, which describes the practice of lovingly and playfully stepping into others phenomenological constructions of their "worlds" or subjective realities. I then noted that, despite the fact that "world"-traveling is often taken up in the feminist philosophical literature as a practice that we can engage in in order to build solidarity with others across differences in identity and lived experiences, the exact relation between "world"-travelling and political solidarity has not been articulated very clearly in literatures on either of those concepts. I then drew on the scant literature which touches on this connection (Fulfer 2020; Jones and Fulfer 2024) in order to further articulate how "world"-traveling can help to build solidarity. Thus, given that I am interested in understanding political solidarity in practice (rather than only in theory), I considered what the practice of "world"-traveling for sake of solidarity building might look like in the contemporary context of the "digital age" (i.e. a context in which many of our interactions with one another are mediated by digital technologies, social media platforms, and the algorithms at work on those platforms). I take up the question of whether it is possible to engage in politically productive "world"-traveling online. In response to this question, I highlight two main worries which cast doubt on the idea that we can "world"-travel through online engagement. This is not to say that doing so is not possible but that the majority of online interactions do not meet the conditions needed for meaningful "world"-traveling and political solidarity. I then ended the chapter by pointing towards some hopeful possibilities and highlighted how it is that social media can be used as a *tool*

for building and maintaining relationships that can bring opportunities for "world"-traveling and building solidarity.

VII. Future Considerations

Although I am relieved to see my work on this dissertation come to a close, I am looking forward to building on this project with future work.

In Chapter 3, I developed an account of "whole-hearted political solidarity" which refers to trusting and affect-laden relationships between those who believe that unjust structures can and should be changed, who are committed to working towards this goal with others in creative ways, and who engage in practices of collective care and mutual aid while doing this political work together. I am interested in spending more time further developing and refining this account and in continuing to learn how to apply it in practice.

In my account of whole-hearted political solidarity, I drew on María José Méndez's discussion of "embodied solidarity" which involves engaging in practices of collective care (2023). I also briefly mention Myisha Cherry's account of "solidarity care" (2020). I am interested in engaging in further exploration of practices of collective care, solidarity care, and mutual aid. This interest in simultaneously philosophical, political, and personal in nature. From lived experience, I have seen the power that practices of collective care hold. We build community by mutually supporting and caring for one another, and through deep generosity for one another, as we do our best to scrape by under the pressures of late-stage capitalism. I plan to continue writing about solidarity, perhaps with an even closer focus on the importance of collective care.

Towards the end of my time working on this project, I experienced a serious and sudden collapse in health which forced me to take a break from the inhuman pace at which I was trying to work. At this time of particularly acute disability, I was called towards picking up my copy of *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) which my close friend had gifted to me about a year prior. The discussions found in this collection of essays spoke to me deeply. They resonated with me so strongly that I carried a copy of this book around (even during the time I was taking a "break" from my philosophical work), highlighting line after line and scribbling madly in the margins. I would like to engage more rigorously with work found in the disability

justice literature, especially as it pertains to the radical ways that those of us living with disabilities and mental illness engage in practices of collective care for one another as we "hustle for liberation" (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha 2018).

In Chapter 2, I invoked the frameworks of restorative and transformative justice, and discussed critiques of punitive justice found in these literatures. I would like to continue engaging in analysis and discussion of the way that the logic of punitive justice is taken up in our interpersonal practices of ascribing responsibility. Although I did not name it as such within the context of this project, I am interested in discussing what some refer to as "cancel culture". While this term typically brings to mind examples of "cancellations" of celebrities (i.e. having their high-profile tours, shows, events, etc. cancelled), I am more interested in considering the impacts of cancel culture on everyday people within our own grassroots communities. Mainstream discussion of cancel culture is currently dominated by right-wing perspectives, but a frank leftist discussion is needed. I am thus interested in analyzing the impacts that punitive practices (like public shaming and social ostracization) have on individuals' well-being, community organizations, our social justice movements, and our arts and music scenes. I am interested in pursuing work that talks honestly about "unlearning the cop within".

I am also deeply passionate about teaching and plan to continue pursuing teaching philosophy at the university-level, focusing specifically on feminist philosophy and social-political philosophy more broadly. There are a number of additional classes I would like to develop, such as classes on restorative and transformative justice and on political solidarity. My teaching practice has often felt like my most impactful form of activism and I feel extremely privileged to have opportunities to take up this role and responsibility.

In addition to teaching philosophy classes, I have also held positions teaching workshops on gender-based sexual violence and teaching consent practices to incoming undergraduate students. I take this work to be extremely powerful and important because it focuses on helping young people build skills that can reduce the prevalence of gender-based sexual violence. Teaching these workshops often feels like an embodiment of the values that I have discussed in this thesis. These workshops are split up into two groups: workshops for men (which focus on helping men find healthy ways to deal with rejection) and workshops for women and non-binary individuals (which focus on helping

women/non-binary students identify what they *do* want out of sex so that they are better equipped to articulate what they do not want). Given my passion for restorative justice, I focus, primarily, on facilitating men's workshops, aiming to help young men build the skills needed for joining in as allies in resistance to gender-based sexual violence. I have found my work with young men (both in these workshops and in the context of the classroom) to be particularly transformative. I would like to continue engaging in work (both academic and otherwise) that helps men build the social and emotional skills needed for developing healthy masculinities.

In short, the topics that I am interested in exploring in the future, in my research and teaching practice, include collective care, solidarity care, care work, disability justice, restorative and transformative justice, and healthy visions for masculinity. I am also interested in producing work that is more accessible to non-academic audiences (such as blog pieces, magazine articles, and zines). I would also like to start a research group on the topic of restorative and transformative justice and hold public talks and community discussions about these topics.

VIII. Brief Closing Thoughts

Writing a dissertation, or academic writing more generally, is a peculiar thing insofar as there is no clear point at which the work is "done"—no point at which there is no further room for improvement. A deep love for this work means that I want it to be as strong as possible, but the desire to address all of the many potential imperfections has proven, at times, to be incredibly overwhelming and demobilizing. While agonizing over small details, I have tried to remind myself of my own arguments which aim to make clear that neither we nor our work need to be perfect in order to offer something meaningful. I hope that I have helped to uncover some helpful insights about how we should think about our responsibility for structural injustice, what a meaningful sense of political solidarity entails, and how we can overcome the challenges and barriers to building political solidarity with one another in order to transform our world. This has truly been a labor of love.

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